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The next-generation
PlayStation magazine

We are

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"Perhaps the biggest news in home entertainment in 20 years is here..."

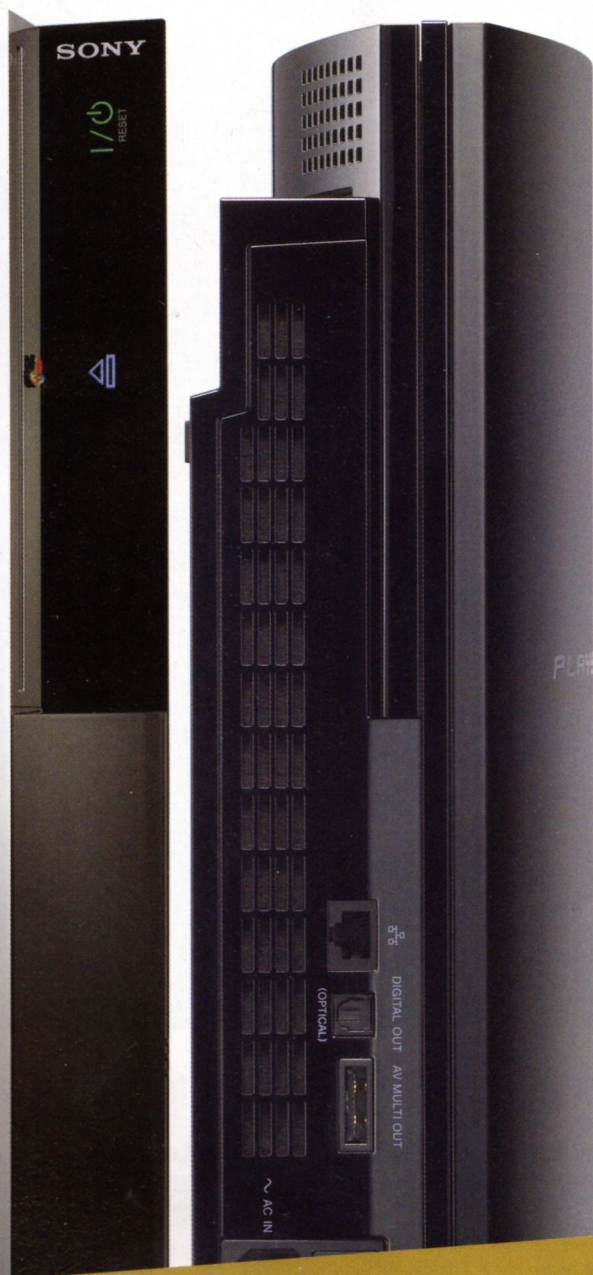
The most comprehensive
PS3 feature ever!

THE ULTIMATE
24-PAGE
PLAYSTATION 3
FEATURE

PLAYSTATION 3

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ever need to know
about PlayStation 3 – and
a whole lot more besides

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PLAYSTATION 3

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NEWS & FEATURES, PS3 MULTIMEDIA,
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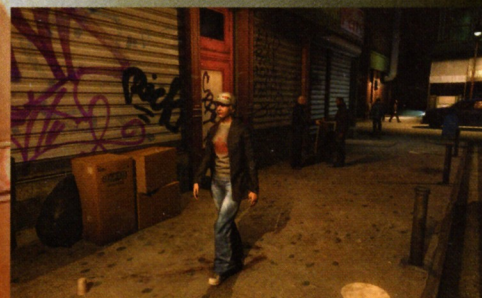
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Your team on **next³** Bringing you the best advice from the experts...

Nick Jones

'Jonesy' as he's been imaginatively nicknamed, has spent the summer evangelising about Ultimate. Ultimate? Ultimate Frisbee, of course. He currently has half the office playing regularly and claims to have invented several moves himself like 'Downtown Chinatown', and the more popular 'Butter Fingers'.



Keith Hennessey

Keith's summer has been plagued by cats. His street has the densest cat population in Dorset - it's safe to say cats outnumber people. Apparently, they get in everywhere - through windows, doors... and make a beeline straight for his fridge. Which, by the way, they've worked out how to open. Keith's plan of attack? Dog in fridge!



Thomas LeClerc

The recent heatwave has led to a sudden change in Tom's appearance. Or least that's what he claims. His hair, once a golden brown colour, has mysteriously transformed into a 'strawberry blonde' colour. Ginger, in other words. This is completely down to the strength of the July sun and not a desire to become more popular.



Aaron Asadi

'Be prepared' could be Aaron's motto. He's been preparing for the arrival of PS3 since the announcement that PSP would work as its remote control. He has since bought an HDTV, surround sound, Lay-zee Boy chair, Sky... all he needs now is the PS3 itself. Shame he can no longer afford one...



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nextmedia
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The Big Screen

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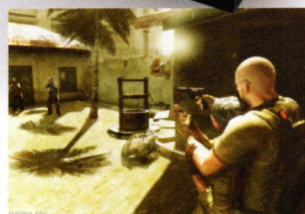
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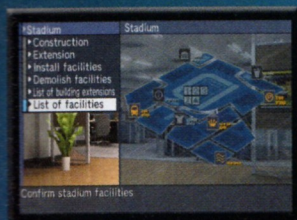
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Welcome to

Hello...

Welcome to the only magazine that's 100 per cent dedicated to PlayStation 3. This is the part where I'd like to introduce you to a few bits and pieces, explain parts of the magazine and tell you about our philosophy.

Next3 will be your guide to getting the maximum out of the world's most powerful gaming console; think of us as a trusted companion that will guide you on your journey through next-generation gaming.

The idea behind Next3 is that it will reflect exactly the capabilities of the PlayStation 3. So that's not just the games and the joys of high-definition gaming, but also all the other great technology that makes the PS3 a behemoth of cutting-edge gaming and multimedia technology.

We'll be telling you all about the latest games and Blu-ray movie releases, keeping you up-to-date with all the freshest PS3 happenings, and giving you step-by-step guides of how to use your PS3 to its fullest potential – and a lot more besides. And because we're the only mag that's 100 per cent PS3, we'll be able to give you the most in-depth coverage of the only console that matters.

So have a look around, relax and stay a while. Breathe it all in and let us guide you on the greatest journey of your gaming life.

Thanks for listening.

Nick



Cutting Edge

Your PlayStation 3 is at the cutting edge of technology – use it. We'll help you realise its full potential with HDTV and peripheral reviews, the latest Blu-ray movie news and reviews and detailed guides showing you how to get the most out of the PlayStation 3's multimedia capabilities.



Exclusive

Be the first to find out all the latest on the biggest PlayStation 3 games. It sounds a bit cheesy but Next3 is all about keeping you up to date with the biggest PS3 games before anyone else. Be it as part of our news section or as an exclusive cover feature, you'll find the very latest on PS3 within these very pages.

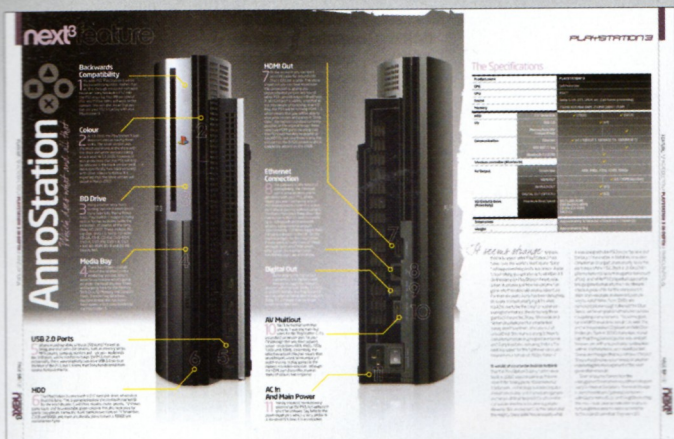


Expert Opinion

By reading Next3 you'll become one of the most informed people on the planet when it comes to PlayStation 3. This magazine is written by bona fide videogaming experts who love their gaming – probably a bit too much for their own good. Still, we'll fuel your passion for your hobby like no one else. Join us.



next3



Unrivalled Coverage

If you want the best then you'll find it here. We'll be covering PlayStation 3 games in the finest detail - our standard review will be four pages enabling us to tell you about every aspect of the games and ensuring you that you'll get the most accurate reviews possible. Only the very best games will be previewed in detail in Next3, as we act as a kind of magical quality filter.



Welcome To The Network

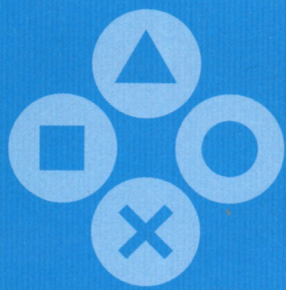
PlayStation 3 is all about networking - networking with PSP. With the Internet for gaming, downloads and friends on video chat, and networking with people with common interests. Next3 is about networking too - not only will we bring you all the latest news and reviews regarding PS3 online, but you'll also be able to play against the team and, by using your PS3, take part in discussions and talk to us direct through our forum.



Moving Images

From next issue you'll get a free DVD packed with the very best content. On it you'll find all the latest hi-res PS3 trailers, game reviews and team commentary, features and developer interviews and a load of exclusive bonus content that we can only hint at now.





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NEWS AND FEATURES FROM AROUND THE WORLD, WITH ONE THING IN COMMON: PLAYSTATION 3

PLAYSTATION
next 3 **Headline News**

"There will certainly not be a lot of titles available at launch as a lot of developers are yet to receive hardware development kit from Sony"

Simon Jeffrey, Sega



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It would be weird, but it's looking increasingly unlikely that any Namco games will be ready for the PS3's launch.

LINING UP FOR THE OFF

Still very little movement on launch titles

WE'RE REALLY NOT that far off. By the time you read this you'll have to be thinking about pre-ordering a PS3 if you want to get in on the act from day one. You'll be a little over three months away from the ultimate next-generation console, and we suspect that many among you will be making the difficult choice about whether to spend your hard-earned cash on extending your summer with a few weeks abroad or putting a downpayment on Sony's black box of videogaming delight. If you want some advice, we say sod the family and go for the latter.

While we're clear on the price, the controller, the online aspect, the kind of games we can expect and the situation regarding the Blu-ray vs HD DVD situation, we're still only marginally closer to a

launch line up than we were at E3. Not an encouraging situation if we're honest. Indeed, it's not just us journalists and you lot – the most important people – that are getting shitty about the unreasonably slow dissemination of information from Sony: it's the developers as well. THQ and Sega are both vociferous in their derision of Sony's sluggish drip-feeding of anything concrete. Sega bigwig Simon Jeffrey recently went so far as to blame Sony for stifling the launch splurge saying: "There will certainly not be a lot of titles available at launch, as a lot of developers are yet to receive hardware development kit from Sony." Similarly, THQ's Brian Farrell pointed the finger at Sony over the canning of *The Sopranos* due to a lack of specs.

So where are we then? At the time of writing, there are only a handful of definite titles scheduled for a 17 November release, with the vanguard of launch games consisting of just *Fatal Inertia*, *Rainbow Six Vegas*, *Tony Hawk's Project 8*, *NBA Live*, *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Full Auto 2: Battlelines*. Less certain but still more than likely launch titles include Activision's *Call Of Duty 3* and *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* as well as Sony's *SingStar*. We're betting that that will pretty much be the lot for the immediate future, as we're expecting a slew of games to be announced at the Tokyo Game Show at the end of September. Still, we're not above some educated guesswork, so cast your eyes right and get a load of the list of titles that we predict to be in the launch line up.



THIS MONTH WE'VE LEARNED...

Shock, horror - **the greatest PC shooter of all time *Half-Life 2* is coming to PS3!** And five other games from developer Valve! On one Blu-ray disc! On the downside, a recent survey says that **Japanese gamers favour the Wii to the PS3** - just wait until they realise it's just a GameCube in a different box and watch them come crawling back. **e-Distribution on PlayStation 3 has taken a leap forward** with the announcement of its EDI partnership programme. **Expect downloadable movies** to be announced soon. Activision confirms ***Call Of Duty 3* will be a launch game for PS3** as the console itself has begun rolling off the production line in Japan. **Blu-ray movies launch in the US and Japan** to a mixed reception due to the delay of Sony's first standalone player - this leaves **Samsung to fight Blu-ray's corner**, its opposition being the HD-DVD format.



✱ The decidedly average-looking *Marvel Alliance* should be out in the launch window. Before next March, basically.



PLAYSTATION **next3** online poll

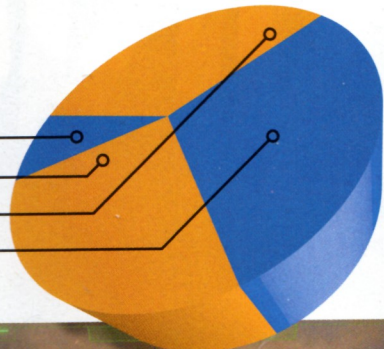
NEXT3 GREASES THE POLL

How much would you pay?

In a recent survey on sister mag Play's forum, we asked you lot just how much you'd be willing to fork out for PS3 titles. The answer was pretty much in keeping with our expectations of software prices at the moment, but with Sony US's Kaz Hirai mentioning a possible hike in software prices, it looks like some of you are going to be more than a little disappointed. That said, he did go on to summarise by saying, "There has been a consumer expectation that disc-based games are maybe \$59 on the high end to \$39 on the low end. So, what I can say now is I think it would be a bit of a stretch to think that we could suddenly turn around and say PS3 games now \$99.99. The first real indication of pricing came from Best Buy Canada's online store which listed PS3 titles as being \$75 Canadian. That works out pretty cheap for us lot, at under 40 quid, although we don't expect we'll see that kind of pricing on our shores. Region-free gaming could be a godsend.

HOW MUCH WOULD YOU PAY FOR PS3 GAMES?

£35 AND UNDER	9%
£35-£40	36%
£40-£45	27%
£40-£50	27%
£50 AND ABOVE	0%



✱ There could be up to as many as 25 games released in the PlayStation 3's launch window with many triple-A games not scheduled until March 2007.

next3 Predicts LAUNCH GAMES

1 RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN, SONY

Aliens! They're everywhere! They might be a little bit grey at the moment, but you can bet this'll lead the pack in terms of multi-player

2 WARHAWK, SONY

Awesome-looking flight sim of epic proportions using the full capabilities of the PS3's new controller. Expect much from this one.

3 F1 '06, SONY

Petrol-heads keep an eye out for this one on the launch date, everyone else can probably just overlook it though.

4 RIDGE RACER 7, NAMCO

The aging drift-racing sim which, despite not having seen much of it, we reckon could well be ready for the launch day.

5 SMACKDOWN VS RAW 2007, THQ

THQ's zenith of the wrestling genre will see the brawler take a huge jump in visuals, but will it be out for 17 November?

6 FIFA '07, EA

It's about that time of year, and EA probably won't break its stride with the introduction of the PS3. This'll be business as usual.

7 FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3, EA

Seeing as it's already out on 360, this has to be a strong favourite for a release title. Will it be an improvement on the other machines version though?

8 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2007, EA

Again, *Tiger Woods* is set to appear on the PS3, but when he does it is completely up to him. Screw the launch day.

9 THE DARKNESS, TAKETWO

It would be great if this made it as a launch title, as it would give the comic-to-game franchise much needed publicity.

10 CALL OF DUTY 3, ACTIVISION

Activision's classic war shooter, *Call Of Duty* can't be too far away from completion from what we've seen of it.

11 EVERYBODY'S GOLF, SONY

Sony's competition to *Tiger*. Given the limited development demands, this is a fair bet to hit the shelves on launch day.

12 MADDEN NFL 07, EA

Not too surprising, but a next-generation *Madden* is bound to sell like hot cakes stateside.

13 UNTOLD LEGENDS: DARK KINGDOM, SONY

We're not too sure about *Untold Legends*, but SOE managed it with the PSP, so why not on the PS3, right?

14 SINGSTAR, SONY

A strong possibility. *SingStar*'s appeal to casual gamers might not make it the best selling title to start with.

15 STRANGLEHOLD, MIDWAY

Seeing this sold with the PS3 will be a truly joyous occasion. Let's hope it can make it on time for the off.

...as well as the already confirmed list:

Fatal Inertia // Rainbow Six Vegas // Tony Hawk's Project 8 // NBA Live 07 // Sonic The Hedgehog // Full Auto 2: Battlelines

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SPECIAL REPORT

PLAYSTATION 3

UK
LAUNCH PRICE

PS3

£425

BUT IS IT OVERPRICED?

ANALYSTS PREDICT SONY WILL STRUGGLE TO KEEP ITS CROWN

THE PRICE OF INNOVATION

THIS IS WAR, and once you've lived through it you'll never be the same again because once you put your hands in a pile of goo that used to be your best friend's face only then will you know the true horror of conflict. Oh alright it's not that serious but let us warn you that war is on the way not in the Middle East but much closer to home, in your own high street – the console war. But like real war there are winners, losers and those who get scared and run for the hills (read: the French) but it's never a draw, there's never a point when all parties concerned shake hands, exchange apologies and agree that by choosing not to fight everyone's a winner. The next generation console war is about to kick off and there can only be one winner and going on previous form many assume that that is going to be the PS3 and that come November it will waltz onto the battlefield and start cleaning house. After all, the big S has dominated the gaming world for two console generations, but post E3 some doubting Thomases feel that this domination is showing signs of weakness, that Sony has left its flanks exposed and the opposition is set to capitalise.

Vigorous moves from Microsoft and Nintendo as well as a hefty price point for the PlayStation 3 has now left some industry analysts questioning whether Sony really has what it takes to win another round. First to air such mutinous remarks was P.J. McNealy of American Technology Researchers who warned that the PS3's complexity could prove a stumbling block: "This is going to be the most complex

"Sony has done very little to justify why the system is worth a premium price for consumers that don't care about raw hardware performance and are not hardcore audio/visual consumers."
DFC Intelligence

ATION

box that's ever been built in this industry. It's going to have a Cell Processor and a Blu-ray drive. The pieces that are going into this box are astounding" All good so far but wait for it: "While Sony has certain manufacturing advantages at the end of the day, this is a very complex process, and it's going to be limited to the yields that it can come up with." Ouch, there it is, right to the heart.

So first up there are concerns about supply shortages, no big deal, what company doesn't experience such problems at launch but the real bone of contention is (and probably always will be) the price. This is the particular thread that San Diego based DFC Intelligence decided to pull last month when it published a memo explaining how the price tag of the PS3 will see Sony go from first to worst. Despite adding a disclaimer that the prediction is "only one of the several possible scenarios", DFC seems to think that Microsoft and Nintendo now have the upper hand: "The glaring weakness of the PlayStation 3 is price, especially when compared to the opposition. Sony has done very little to justify why the system is worth a premium price for consumers that don't care about raw hardware performance and are not hardcore audio/visual consumers. Unfortunately we believe that represents over 90% of the consumers in the marketplace."

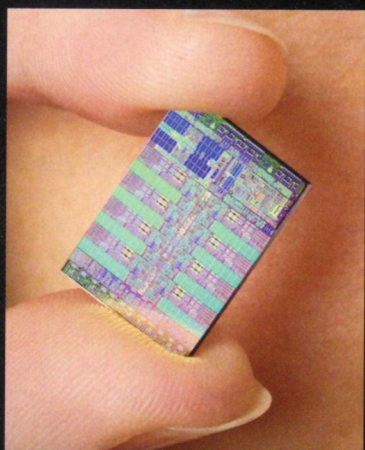
90 percent seems like far too high a figure to us, after all when it comes to power, gamers are like addicts always wanting more, more, more. DFC does acknowledge that the PS2 was such a success because of the diverse range of titles which made the console "a complete entertainment system for the family priced under \$300 - but with the PS3 the company is going after the high-end user, it is almost as if Coca-cola not only decided to go with a new formula, but also decided to exit the low-brow soft-drink business and go into high end wines." Oh, that one hurt, man down! We're not sure how many more blows we can take. There must be some way to rectify the situation? Apparently not, the

War Of The Words

Who's saying what in the battle of the next-gen consoles

FOR	AGAINST
I'm sure they'll sell out - Scott Steinberg, Sega	The glaring weakness of the PlayStation 3 is the price - DFC Intelligence
The PlayStation 3 is huge... it's going to have a big impact - David Zucker, Midway	It's going to be limited to the yields it can come up with - PJ McNealy, American Technology Researchers
The PlayStation 3 is like nothing else - Ken Kuturagi	It's more expensive than my rent - Some Japanese guy

SPECIAL REPORT



DEVELOPING A HABIT

PS3 developer faces financial trouble?

While we're on the subject of money we thought it best to alert you to the plight facing developers wanting to make games for our uber powerful PS3. It appears this month as though a PlayStation 3 game has already been canned without getting anywhere near the shop shelf. A fansite reported that Track7Games has cancelled the PlayStation 3 development of its upcoming game *Theisis*. The site claims that 'the developer blames the problem on the exceptionally high cost of developing for the PS3. While Track7Games has since gone on record as saying it never officially confirmed that a PS3 version of the game was in the works the developer's Managing Director Vicky Valanos was quoted as saying: 'If Sony were to offer us assistance in producing a PS3 version we would be more than happy to oblige.' With a big fat loan to pay back and a massive PS3 PR machine to fuel we're not sure Sony will be dishing out any funds at all.

Tale Of The Tape

Just what do you get for that £425?

	PlayStation 3	Xbox 360	Nintendo Wii
Blu-ray	✓	✗	✗
Internet Browser	✓	✗	✗
Wireless Multimedia Hub	✓	✓	✗
Hard Drive	✓	✓	✗
HDMI	✓	✗	✗
Motion Sensor Controller	✓	✗	✓
Handheld Connectivity	✓	✗	✗
Video Chat	✓	✓	✗
True HD 1080p	✓	✗	✗
Downloadable Movies and Music	✓	✗	✗



PlayStation 3 isn't even released yet but according to DFC it is fighting a losing battle: "a \$600 price point is okay for launch but it will not fly in holiday 2007. If Sony wants to drive unit volume 2007 needs to be not only the year of price cuts, but the year of drastic price cuts. There is going to be a shake-up in the videogame industry and even if Sony executes perfectly there could be a new market leader in two years."

Bleak news indeed but these are merely predictions, randomly ramblings from those who by their own admission aren't sure "which way the market will shake out". We say let's wait and see what each next-gen console has to offer before proclaiming one as the 'winner' and condemning others to the scrapheap. It's really no matter anyway, these researchers are outsiders looking in – they don't know any better than to throw more muck than a monkey with over active bowels but we can expect some support

from the industry surely? Perhaps not, as even heads of leading game studios have expressed concern, hollering for price cuts to ensure Sony's status as chief among the console manufacturers. Yves Guillemot, president of Ubisoft is adamant that the console's price will have to drop in 2007 if it's to remain competitive. Clearly convinced that 2007 is a key year in determining the console race, Guillemot maintains that appealing to gamers isn't enough, and that Sony has to "play with the Blu-ray platform in the consumer electronics market as well". Whilst this is a sentiment echoed by many in the industry, most vehemently Sega of America exec, Scott Steinberg, even the industry high fliers admit that the console is going to be successful. Steinberg asserts that the high price 'is a concern' but Sony's strong brand foothold in the market and commitment to quality should ensure that the console is a hit with consumers.

Money In The Bank

Sony borrows 80 billion Yen

Times are tight and the truth is we all owe money to someone whether it be the bank, the government or your moaning girlfriend who bought you a beer about three months ago and won't let you forget about it, but it's good to know we're not alone as even multi-million grossing companies have to pay the piper. In order to prove that it's truly serious about meeting launch demands Sony has taken out an 80 Billion Yen (545 million Euro) loan in order to increase production of the PlayStation 3 and Blu-ray. This is the first time the Japanese giant has had to borrow funds in over ten years and while that's not the best news in itself it does mean that Sony is serious about meeting its PS3 shipment figures of 2 million globally at launch and 6 million units by the end of the fiscal year.



Sony's stellar reputation and high production standards are factors most of the PS3 naysayers seem to have overlooked

Sony's stellar reputation and high production standards are factors most of the PlayStation 3 naysayers seem to have overlooked. Whilst it's true products can not be sold on reputation alone Sony has spent years establishing itself in the market and has no plans to throw in the towel now. Just as Steinberg himself puts it "it's an expensive device, but it's a very powerful device. Effectively you've got thousands of dollars worth of arcade technology in a machine that's 500 bucks, 600 bucks. So there's a lot of value in that machine." Steinberg isn't the only person out there to realize that Sony is offering much more than a games system as in a recent interview Midway CEO and President David Zucker gallantly defended Sony's next-generation platform: "There's a lot in the PlayStation 3; think about the fact that you get Blu-ray, the next generation leap in DVD, in the machine," Zucker continued.

"When you think about some of the feature sets that come with it, including the Hard Drive, it seems like a reasonable price for an early launch." If you can remember that far back, Midway didn't have any games at all for the Xbox 360 at the time of launch and to this date none have emerged, but it has assured the gaming public that it will make its presence felt for the launch of the PS3. In the words of Zucker "to get the full performance out of some of the games".

Even though at present the industry is experiencing more bitching than in this year's *Big Brother* house, the people that really matter are getting over the shock of the pricing plan and beginning to realize that the PS3 offers more than any other next-generation console possibly can: true HD, HDMI, Blu-ray, Internet browsing, handheld connectivity, the list goes on. So is the war really over before it has begun? Not a chance.



Wii more favourable on price?

Japanese say Wii love Nintendo more

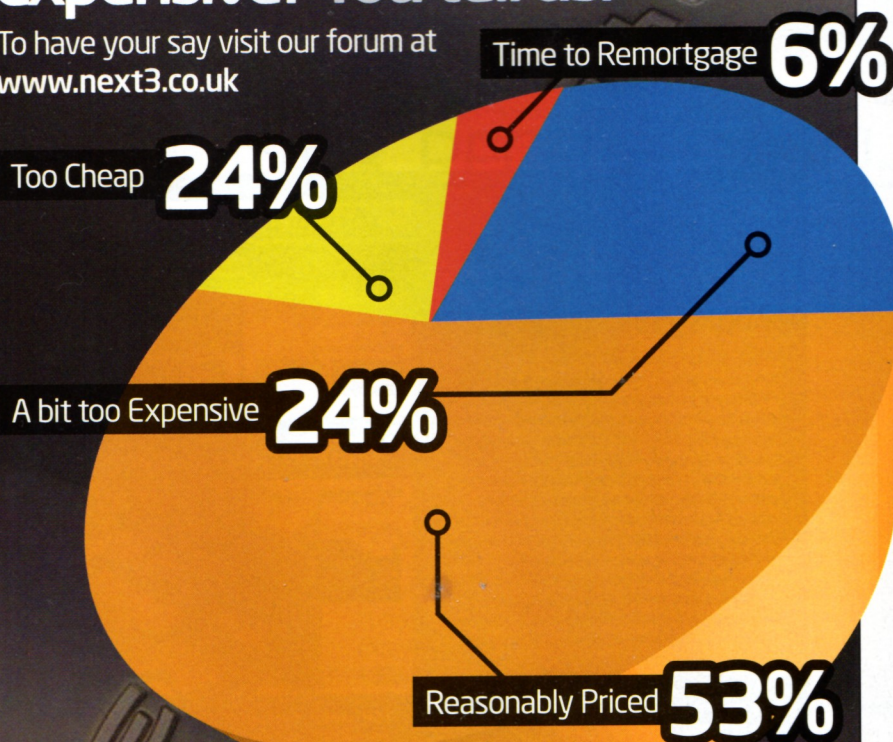
Turns out it's not just research companies and analysts that have a few harsh words to throw Sony's way as last month the unthinkable happened and the Japanese gaming community starting biting the hand that feeds it by slagging off Sony. In a recent poll in Japan's Ge-Maga that asked developers throughout the nation a number of questions regarding Sony's next-gen platform over 90% of the people surveyed reported that they think the PS3 is too pricey. One developer added 'It's more expensive than my rent'. Well, if this comedy genius spent less time on the karaoke machine and thinking up hilarious quips there just might be a few better games on the market. Yeah, you've been served.

Unfortunately price wasn't the only sticking point as the poll revealed that over half were unhappy with Sony's decision to sell two SKUs and believe it will have trouble shifting units with the current line-up of announced titles. Well, at least we can rely on the Japanese public to show the PS3 some love – ah, well if an article recently published on Famitsu.com is anything to go by Sony still has some convincing to do. When visitors to the site were asked which hardware has their greatest interest and which they think would win the next-gen war the Wii ran away with it mustering over 70% of votes while the PS3 only managed to bag around 20%. Once again our good friend the 'price' was blamed for much of the disinterest with 88% of responders saying it was too high.

Nevertheless, just when we were starting to lose hope and think that it was only us who loved the PS3 word came in from Amazon Japan that its customer data showed a stronger interest in the PS3 than the Wii. Contrary to the Famitsu poll it seems that gamers are voting with their wallets placing pre-orders for select PS3 software. The source of the new Amazon information PunchJump writes "The overseas retail division of Amazon.com has published a graph that represents customer interest in each platform, with the 60GB PS3 edging out the Wii. The 20GB PS3 was the least popular among customers." Okay, so it's not so encouraging news on the 20GB front but with Japanese gamers' love for online gaming and MMOs the wish for a bigger Hard Drive isn't too surprising. Still, add together the two PS3 editions together and the PlayStation 3 could outsell the opposition by a healthy margin. Just wait until our friends in the East see what Sony has lined up for them at the Tokyo Game Show and they'll barely even be thinking about the repackaged GameCube, in fact Wii have forgotten about it already.

Is the PlayStation 3 too expensive? You tell us!

To have your say visit our forum at www.next3.co.uk



my singstar
browse your media

"Having realized a successful e-Distribution program, it's about time we made our move too"

Ken Kutaragi eyes the success of Apple's iTunes Music Store



The Party
15th November 2006

photo

03
of 12



R1 page up

FOLDER 1
12 AVAILABLE

R2 page down

PS3 LIVE?

Sony's rival to Live will be the future

SONY'S digital distribution network has been further hyped by everyone at the Sony camp with External Production Director John Hight firming up plans for the initiative as well as Kutaragi and Harrison both declaring their faith in the system since the announcement at this year's Game Developers' conference. The chief benefits for Sony, as seen by Hight, are better and quicker feedback, cheaper distribution costs, greater protection against piracy and an enormous remote market. Indeed, given the fervent verbal love directed toward the initiative by virtually every Sony bigwig, it's easy to imagine the PS3 being the last console with material media. With a respectful nod to Apple, Ken Kutaragi identified the company as having "realized a successful e-Distribution program, it's about time we made our move too", suggesting the PS3 would feature at the forefront of Sony's Media delivery. Similarly gushy about the e-Distribution system, President of SCEA, Kaz Hirai enthused that the PS3's online functionality be seen as central to the experience rather than being, as happened with the PS2, a "nice-to-have feature".

In terms of funding for the programme, Hight encouragingly pledges that Sony are not only "fund[ing] development for first party games" but are also "open to self-funded games". With such an obvious downturn in the quantity of Xbox Live

FUTURE PROOF'S IN THE PUDDING Sony boss explains high pricing

Despite the fact that Sony - should all go as planned around the launch of the PS3 - is looking to lose over a billion dollars (if analysts Merrill Lynch are to be believed) on the sales of hardware, there have been concerns about the PS3's pricing right across the industry, most notably from Ubisoft head Yves Guillemot. Countering these attacks, Sony CEO Howard Stringer has recently conceded that Sony are taking a riskier approach with their sky-high price tag, reasoning that buyers are "paying for potential" when investing in such a future-proof commodity. Also mentioned was the HD-DVD versus Blu-ray debate with Stringer predictably exclaiming that studios are "beginning to sense that the pendulum is swinging". We're guessing that he means in the direction of Blu-ray.

support of late, it's interesting to note such a zealous thrust toward making Sony's digital marketplace such a pivotal part of the PS3. Similarly noteworthy is the assertion on Sony's submission website that "Partnerships resulting from EDI (e-Distribution Initiative) will enable the developers' downloadable games to be published for individual purchase or subscription over SCE's direct distribution methods", alluding to a PS3 online download subscription service. There



still aren't nearly enough concrete facts to make an accurate judgment of the possibilities Sony's e-Distribution Initiative offers, but you can be sure, with Kutaragi and company waffling on ten to the dozen, we'll have more next month.

ACTIVISION DOWN ON E-DISTRIBUTION

Publisher CEO predicts healthy future for the high street

Gleefully pouring cold water over Sony's e-Distribution initiative, Activision CEO Bobby Kotick is predicting a slow start for the service, so very slow in fact that they're "incomprehensible as an opportunity", putting forward users' inadequate bandwidth and Hard Drive capacities as limitations to the system. Also commenting on the state of the industry as a whole, Kotick mentions the need to make game production more streamlined and publishers' increasing tendency to focus on multi-million selling games, rather than numerous lesser selling projects.

On the bright side however, the Activision head honcho is of the opinion that downloadable content like characters, weapons and missions are likely to be the main source of activity in the PS3's marketplace, and the next ten years are likely to be the best the industry has ever had. Thanks Bobby, very encouraging.



Connect.com is Sony's current download service - expect the PS3 to use a similar system.



PSP content can currently be downloaded wirelessly at several hotspots around Britain.

WII-MOTIONALLY SENSITIVE

Sony patents revolutionary motion capturing technology



IF THE IDEA of the Wii controller excites you, as it seems to have done with many, you'll be pleased to hear that a recent patent has been filed by Sony Computer Entertainment allowing for, amongst other things, a Wii-esque motion sensing wand. Whereas other similar patents, like Microsoft's application in March this year for a dual sensor device, require more than one camera, Sony's revolutionary technology only requires the one bit of gear to be able to map movement and transfer it into a game. It's worth noting that whilst this gadget is no doubt transferable to non-gaming applications the initial outline for the patent states that it's been primarily designed to control movement in a game. At the moment the system only seems to allow control via a rod which, rather like the Wii controller, could be used for any number of titles, from tennis to flight sims. The most important thing about this new technology however, apart from the ability to map in 3D from one camera, is its compatibility with the PS3's Cell which is, according to many tech-heads, one of the best processors for image recognition and duplication.



EYEDENTIFICATION PLEASE...

Stop flapping, start thinking

We've always seen the EyeToy as a fun peripheral, but it's never had anything genuinely intriguing or cerebral to make the most of its unique capabilities. The PS3's first EyeToy title, *Eyedentity*, which features a brace of hot chicks as your guides looks to be changing all that with what could be a successful attempt at a motion sensing espionage title quite unlike last year's miserable *SpyToy* effort. We'll have more on *Eyedentity* next month.



THROWBACK RECEIVES ACCLAIM

Toronto based publisher acquires leftover titles



HAVING SOLD OFF a fair few of its assets already, Acclaim Entertainment – who filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy way back in 2004 – has now been assimilated into the remaining base of videogame publishers. Canadian publisher Throwback Entertainment, in a recent auction, has managed to nab the rights to many of Acclaim's IPs, most notably *Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance*, *Summer Heat Beach Volleyball*, *Legends Of Wrestling*, *Exterm-G Racing*, *Re-Volt* and *Vexx*.

Commenting on the 17 year history of the publishers, Throwback's CEO, Thomas Maduri said that "Acclaim Entertainment

was responsible for the creation of some wonderful, original games, and unfortunately couldn't see them through their lifecycle. We are very pleased to have been afforded the opportunity to take these titles through the next generation, and onwards," suggesting a sizable presence on the PS3. Whilst Throwback weren't quick enough to get hold of either the name – bought by a former Activision executive to distribute online Korean titles – or what many see as Acclaim's greatest property, *Turok*, fans will be pleased to hear that Propaganda Games are currently hard at work on a next-gen version of the seminal dino horror.

newsflashes

Just in...

JOB'S A GOOD'UN

Treyarch to take on Bond

Development company Treyarch, the team behind the massively successful *Call Of Duty* series has been advertising for a new member of the team to join them in creating the next in the *Bond* franchise at Gameplay Designer level. Rumoured to have cost Activision over \$70 million, the rights to the *James Bond* series is seen as a massive acquisition. Having taken over the licence from industry giants EA, and in possession of the series until the 2014, Activision seems to be stepping up a gear in their commitment to developing big-budget franchises. Also mentioned in the job listing was that this iteration of the series would be developed on the next-gen consoles. Activision has confirmed the authenticity of the job listing, but as yet are unwilling to comment further.



Will Bond's first outing on the next-gen platforms be more of the same, or can Activision make the most of the super spy?

POOR RETURNS AT GAME

GAME have quibbles with returns

Treated by cynics as a free games service, GAME's 'no quibble' returns policy looks to be getting the shove in favour of a standard 28 day affair. Currently in trials, the change will no doubt see many gamers who take advantage of the scheme turn to other stores, but GAME are confident that the change won't have a substantial effect on sales. GAME have been thought to have had pressure applied by publishers unhappy with the hugely successful scheme. Coming off the back of a series of difficult results for the high street retailers, things seem to be looking up for GAME – who were recently rumoured to be having buy-out negotiations with US giants GameStop – with reports of a gradual upturn in sales, sparking them into a plan to open over 70 new branches across Europe.



Driv3r, the most returned videogame in history. "Why?" you ask, well, if you ask us it may have something to do with the fact that it was absolute shite.

newsflashes

Just in...

ATARI SELL OFF

Ubisoft reflects on acquisition

Confirming recent stories of Atari's financial difficulties, Ubisoft has concluded a deal with Atari, ensuring rights to the *Driver* brand as well as purchasing assets and personnel from developers Reflections Interactive. The final price agreed was €19 Million (approx \$24 million). Commenting on the procurement, Ubisoft COE Yves Guillemot was excited about such an easy in to the racing genre, going on to say "With more than 14 million units sold throughout the world, *Driver* is one of the most successful brands in the history of videogames. We look forward to leveraging the unique knowledge of the Ubisoft studios to ensure that *Driver* will be one of the leading brands of the next generation of consoles." Well happy leveraging Yves, let's hope you can steer the series to the top of the charts.



Hopefully the sale of the *Driver* franchise will see Atari get back on its feet.

RAWK ON!

Konami joins the jam

Konami, creator of weighty arcade novelty title, *Guitar Freaks*, has trademarked the name *Guitar Revolution*, fitting in with Konami's range of music and rhythm titles. Included in the US patent are telling descriptions of the product. We're not sure about you, but a "videogame controller in the form of an electronic toy guitar, sold as a unit," sounds remarkably familiar to Red Octane's hugely successful *Guitar Hero* which, despite the meaty price tag has sold over 400,000 units. Well placed to produce such a title, Konami has not only been responsible for some of the most physical titles ever conceived in its *Dance Dance Revolution* series, but has also given us the slightly less exciting *Karaoke Revolution*. We hope this will be one of its better efforts.



Popular in Japanese arcades, *Guitar Freaks* could make you sweat after 20 minutes just from carrying the weighty controllers.

With Wes Craven leading the charge to next-gen videogame direction we can't imagine what kind of horrors lie ahead

Robert Englund in *A Nightmare On Elm Street* - we'll take a Freddy game any day. As long as you play Freddy.

WES CRAVES VIDEOGAMES

Wes Craven moving to videogames?

WES CRAVEN, architect of some of the previous two decades' most avant garde horror flicks is contemplating a career



An 18-certificate will be a cert (and a must) for any *A Nightmare On Elm Street*-licensed game.

shift to the games industry, and is currently in talks to create an original videogame. Much like fellow directors, Spielberg and the Wachowski brothers, Craven's fervent beard stroking has been brought about by an increased focus on "deep stories, characters and narratives" within the industry. Strangely however, these aren't aspects Craven is particularly noted for, with films such as *Nightmare On Elm Street*, *Shocker* and the *Scream* series under his belt.

Equally strangely, the former teacher has indicated a leaning toward creating more educational videogame titles, citing enormous possibilities in the realms of politics and health. Videogames, whilst no doubt drawing increasingly heavyweight names from the film industry are still seen very much as the runt of the media litter. We're hoping for something of a change when the PS3 hits however, but with Wes Craven leading the charge to next-gen videogame direction we can't imagine what kind of horrors lie ahead.

THE PITCH

Wes Craven films we'd like to see on PS3

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET: EVOLUTION

Take control of a quartet of dreamworld captives, and evade Kruger with a mixture of puzzling, including floor, block and key finding posers and rudimentary two-button combat. NB: Robert Englund to lend his likeness to the game.



A *Nightmare On Elm Street*.

WES CRAVEN'S SCREAM: THE OFFICIAL GAME OF THE MOVIE

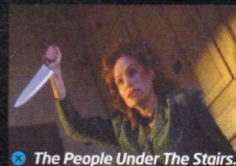
As the masked murderer you're charged with killing, *Hitman* style, the inhabitants of an entire street. Each level treats you to a new house, and you're totally free to kill the way you want, all guns blazing or the stealthy way.



Drew Barrymore in *Scream*.

THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS: STAIRWAY TO HELL

Stealth based title involving elements of hostage rescue, escort missions and mini-games. Collect bonus icons to unlock concept art and original posters from this film and others in the Wes Craven stable.



The *People Under The Stairs*.

DES RES?

Resident Evil 3 movie announced

PAUL W. ANDERSON,

the writer and director responsible for numerous game to film conversions such as *Mortal Kombat* and *Alien Versus Predator*, is now back in control of the *Resident Evil* series, ready to take charge of what's seen to be a tidy post script to the various storylines of Capcom's seminal videogames. As, by general consensus, the previous two *Resident Evil* films haven't exactly been mind-blowing cinematic events, we're not expecting this effort to reach any dizzy heights than 'pedestrian', but at very least the setting sounds reasonably interesting.

Having blasted her way out of Raccoon City, and successfully evaded the once-human Nemesis project, Milla Jovovich's Alice - along with fellow escapees Jill Valentine and Code Veronica's Claire Redfield - manages to hitch a ride on a *Mad Max*-esque convoy of survivors. Chiefly set in and around the deserts of Nevada, home of the world's gambling capital Las Vegas, *Resident Evil: Extinction* charts the group's journey to Alaska in the desperate hope of a life away from brain-hungry zombies.



No dogs down under RESERVOIR DOGS GAME BANNED IN AUSTRALIA

The Australian Office of Film and Literature Classification has refused to classify the videogame iteration of Quentin Tarantino's cult classic, *Reservoir Dogs*. Despite protests from Blitz Games, the development team responsible for Eidos' upcoming title, who cite the fact that it's entirely possible to play through the game without actually killing anyone, the Aussie OFLC have forced Atari (the publishers down under) to scrap the title, by making it unsaleable.

Numerous other titles like *Manhunt*, *BMX XXX*, *GTA III*, *GTA: San Andreas* and *The Punisher* have also been refused an OFLC rating and resultantly banned in the country, but some later resubmissions - most notably *San Andreas* - have been classified.



6 things we love about... Assassin's Creed

WHAT THE PRINCE OF PERSIA DEVELOPER DID NEXT



1//The realism of it all The folk you're out to 'whack' are proper, full-on real people from the 12th century, all researched and selected as those most responsible for the horrendous killings, pillaging and murder during the third crusade.

2//A top lead character The lead character, Altair, is unfathomably cool. Yeah, okay, he's got a finger missing, but that's only to allow easier access to the retractable dagger hidden up his sleeve. You most certainly wouldn't want to meet this guy in a dark alley.

3//The Momentum system There's a completely unique momentum system that ups the level of realism dramatically. Run too fast while escaping and you're more likely to lose your footing and go for a crippling tumble down some nasty medieval steps

4//Reliable development team It's being developed by the guys responsible for one of the most popular series' on the PS2, *Prince Of Persia*. The bunch at Ubisoft's Montreal studio have been hard at work here, and there's much about their seminal PS2 franchise present in *Assassin's Creed*.

5//Groundbreaking gameplay There's clearly more to it than the majority of screenshots and demos display, as there's an obvious hint that there's a degree of virtual reality included in the storyline. Expect not only groundbreaking gameplay, but narrative too.

6//Social stealth The idea of 'social stealth' in the huge cityscapes of the medieval holy land is something to look forward to. Rather than keeping to the blackness of the shadows, you're encouraged to become the grey man in amongst the gigantic crowds.

NOT ONE,
NOT TWO BUT
SIX HALF-LIFE
2 & VALVE-
DEVELOPED
GAMES FOR
PS3

NEWS: ▽ 6 THINGS WE LOVE // **HALF-LIFE 2** // NEW GAMES ▽



MONEY MATTERS

While it might seem that by giving us six games for the price of one EA might be losing out on a pretty penny, the truth is that by releasing the console versions it has the potential to add significantly to its already bulging bank balance. In the past EA had been losing out on money from sales of the PC *Half-Life 2* episodes due to their availability through Valve's Steam digital distribution system, which has registered over 1.6 million users for *Episode 1* alone. So now EA can look forward to revenues from the sales of the actual game and probably a slice of profits from new downloadable episodic content too.

HALF-LIFE LIVES ON PS3

Valve's shooter headlines EA Christmas console line-up

AS PART OF our endless quest to bring you the latest PS3 news we recently travelled to San Francisco to check out EA's big videogame love-in Hot Summer Nights. Aptly named we think too because after hearing what the games giant had to say we felt sweaty, flustered and couldn't sleep a wink – the catalyst for such Lee Evans like behaviour? The announcement that *Half-Life 2: Episode 2* will launch on PS3, Xbox 360 and PC simultaneously and that's just the beginning.

Studio founder Gabe Newell took to the stage and informed the audience that

the console version will come complete with the original *Half-Life 2* and *Episode 1* giving PS3 gamers 'the entire *Half-Life* experience.' This experience is to be enriched by the inclusion of a brand new FPS game set in the *Half-Life 2* universe called *Portal* that lets players use a special *Prey*-like gun to shoot holes in the walls and create new portals. These new doorways can then be used to transport you (and other objects) to different rooms. Unlike *Prey* it seems like you can create an unlimited number of portals on just about any surface available to

you. The demo footage screened at the show featured a range of exciting ways to exploit the technology in terms of offensive strategies and puzzle solving. All sounding good so far? Well, it's about to get better.

SIX-SHOOTER

With the original *Half-Life 2*, *Episode 1*, *Episode 2*, *Counter Strike Source* and *Portal* that's five games in one big *Half-Life* hit but it doesn't stop there as Valve reached into its seemingly bottomless magician's hat to produce a sixth game to

**PORTAL
COMBAT**
A STEP-BY-STEP
GUIDE TO
HOW VALVE'S
NEW PORTAL
GAME WORKS



Now shoot another door on the side you're standing and simply stroll through the portal.



• Hmm, you are in a pickle; a huge chasm with seemingly no way across.

• Use the gun to shoot an opening on the other side of the fire.



GO TEAM FORTRESS

A brief history of the F-Team

Almost ten years ago a trio of bright-eyed developers named Robin Walker, John Cook and Ian Caughley created *Team Fortress* and with it one of the most important mod releases of all time. The mod was for the original *Quake* and for the first time allowed class-based team play in a 3D shooter – players were given the opportunity to select the role of sniper, spy, medic or soldier type and ply their skills in a variety of multi-player modes.

As you can expect this caused quite a stir in the gaming world resulting in the team being snapped up by developer Valve and set to work on a similar mod for *Half-Life* called *Team Fortress Classic*. Shortly after its release in 2001 *Team Fortress 2* was announced and a few early screenshots released, however after whetting our appetites news seemed to dry up completely. So you can imagine our delight when the big fat info cork was pulled out and we finally clapped eyes on this legendary game, which was sporting very similar properties but a completely different look. There are nine different soldier classes in total including Engineer, Pyro and Scout and each one looks very unique with features that draw attention to their major attributes. So the heavy arms guy has very err heavy arms, muscle-clad more than heavy really, and the sniper is as skinny as a rake so has a much better chance of hiding on the battlefield. Team all this with some good old dynamic lighting effects and stunning texture detail and you've got yourself one of the most compelling games of the last few years, oh and did we mention it's absolutely free?



HALF-LIFE MOVIE IN THE MAKING?

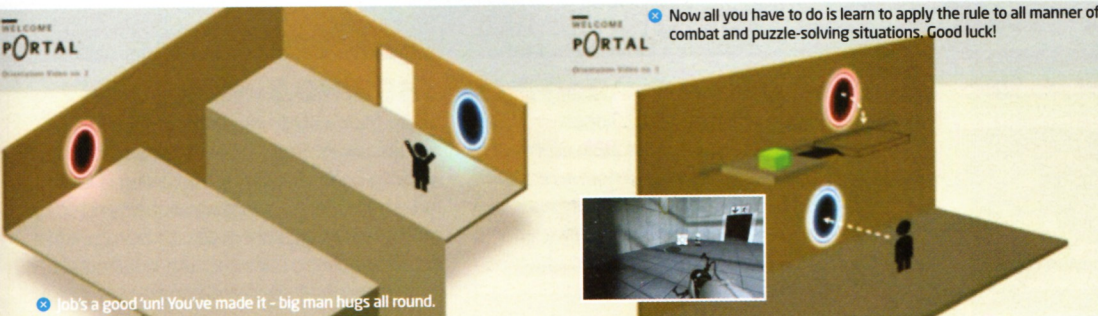
As well as telling all about *Half-Life: Episode 2* recently those crazy kids over at Valve have also been talking up the chances of a *Half-Life* movie. However while the company's co-founder and managing director Gabe Newell did express his desire to bring *Half-Life* to the big screen no adaptation will be made unless it will do the game justice: "It's just not going to happen until we think that there's a director and a cast and a script and can say this is a movie we'd like to go and see, not just some vanity piece." Newell continued "We've seen what happens to those sorts of movies and the world would be a better place if nine tenths of those projects had never happened." So it's clear Newell's not too impressed with recent game to film conversions but he did end on a positive note in regards to the *Half-Life* movie saying: "I'm a huge fan of movies and we have absolutely no reason not to do it." So in the future along with playing the likes of *Half-Life 2: Episode 3* or (dare we say?) *Half-Life 3* on the PS3 we could well be watching the *Half-Life* movie on Blu-ray.

be added to the bundle and it's probably the most exciting yet, *Team Fortress 2*. Yes, Valve is actually still making it. Many thought the project had been canned after it was announced more than five years ago and then never talked about again. Well, its return heralds a much more exaggerated, cartoony visual style making the characters look more like they belong in a Pixar movie than a battlefield indicating that the series is heading in a very different direction – not that this is going to deter us at all, quite the opposite in fact – if the first game was anything to go by this will be one of the best-looking and playing class-based multi-player games around.

Along with the deluge of additional games we also got to learn a little something about *Episode 2*'s content as Newell explained that it was about

getting players out of 'City 17'. There'll also be plenty of new weapons and new enemies to use them on including Striders. Smaller walker-like beasts were also seen attacking a group of human fighters. The Source engine had a lot of reworking to compliment the fancy new 'cinematic physics' system that was invented by Valve's Gray Horsfield who worked for Weta Digital on the production of *King Kong* and *LOTR* – ensuring *Half-Life* should have a truly epic feel. Ah it's been so long since we've had an epic feel.

Despite publisher EA setting no concrete release date *Half-Life 2: Episode 2* is expected to arrive this Christmas, so if you've been more nice than naughty this year there's a half chance you'll be playing *Half-Life* this Yule tide.



Now all you have to do is learn to apply the rule to all manner of combat and puzzle-solving situations. Good luck!

Job's a good 'un! You've made it – big man hugs all round.

newsflashes

Just in...

JAFFE BREAKS

David Jaffe expressed boredom with *God of War*

In one of the most disturbing pieces of news we've received this month, development genius David Jaffe has intimated that he might not be heading up a third *God of War*, saying in his personal blog that "as a guy who's designed one of these damn epic things I can tell you that I no longer have any interest in making these kinds of games". Aaaarrggghhh! Jaffe tries to justify his position using a rather bizarre musical analogy, likening narrative driven epics to using a trumpet to carve out a story in a wall:

"Sure you can do it, and you may even have a nice story scratched onto the wall when you are done. But it's not really what the trumpet is for and there are a hell of a lot easier ways to write a story." Currently working on a PSP title, and rather enjoying it, Jaffe hasn't quite ruled out the prospect of a third *God of War*, so we can all breathe easy for the minute.



Could *God of War 2* be the last outing for a Jaffe-guided Kratos. We don't know about you, but we don't trust anyone else with the series.

ICELY DOES IT

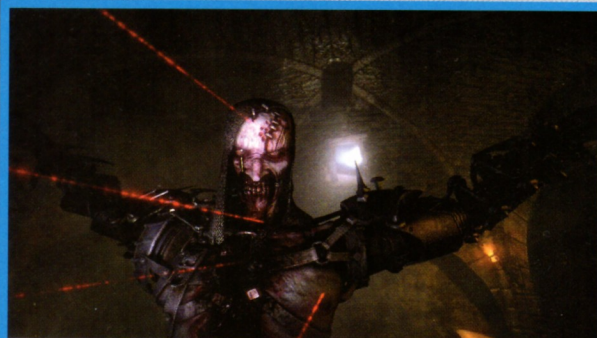
NHL 2K7 features revealed

The only thing we were really made aware of about *NHL 2K7* at E3 was the shadow assignment – selecting members of your team to cover the opposition players in various ways. Needless to say, we weren't all that excited about it. Fortunately however, 2K Sports has announced a good deal more add-ons and features for the PS3 iteration. We're not massive fans of the ice hockey sports genre, but you can't ignore their immediate, pacey appeal. The main difference looks to be additions to the Pro Control mechanic, allowing drop passes and expanding the options available to the player. The adjustments affect both offence and defence and the pressure control system lets you control the force with which your AI team mates go for the puck. According to 2K Sports there's plenty more to announce, but we'll just have to wait. Very nice.



new games

Just announced



CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO

THE WHAT // Described to us as "Ghost Recon with actual ghosts" by Codemasters PR, Clive Barker's *Jericho* is almost exactly that. You take control of a Special Forces unit that goes in to investigate the sudden reappearance of a lost city. It's your job to go in, fight the monsters and locate and destroy the source of the evil.

THE WHO // Well, Clive Barker's penning both the story and the "supernatural horror concept". Clive promises the game "to be the most spectacular, creative, and unflinching realization of a Clive Barker nightmare that will drag players in kicking and screaming." And yes, there's also going to be "phantasmagorical special effects".



TEKKEN 6

THE WHAT // It's the return of the King Of Iron Fist Tournament and there's little doubt about the appeal of this offering, especially given *Dark Resurrection*'s recent arrival in the office. Widely regarded as the more casual side of the *Virtua Fighter*/*Tekken* debate, we're sure you'll be lapping this up next year.

THE WHO // Namco is the creator of some of the most iconic games in history: *Pacman*, *Pole Position*, *Dig Dug*, *Ridge Racer*, *Soul Calibur* and, of course *Tekken*. Their fighting pedigree is in no doubt whatsoever, as they're still chucking out updates significantly better than previous versions. We're hoping this will blow our minds.

We want i



MONSTER MADNESS

THE WHAT // There you are with three mates trying to organise a house party while your parents are away when bam, an invasion of zombies hits your town. Using regular (and not so regular) household items in an A-Team styleé, it's up to you and your mates to repel the foul beasts.

THE WHO // Artificial Studios and Immersion Software and Graphics, despite having a rather limited portfolio are looking to take videogame development up a whole notch with the combined use of a variant Unreal 3 engine and the Ageia PhysX chip. If nothing else, we're expecting some pretty natty physics.



NEED FOR SPEED: CARBON

THE WHAT // The latest in the *Need For Speed* franchise, and a sure thing for the number one spot this Christmas, *Carbon* takes the ageing racing series to a different stage. Apparently canyon racing is where it's at nowadays, so who better placed to bring it to the masses than EA in its yearly update.

THE WHO // EA's Black Box studios have had their year in which to revamp the series, and it seems as if they've spent most of it in meetings about how to generate the next big thing in the street racing scene. The only real innovation appears to be the Autosculpt technology, giving you an unprecedented level of customisation.



CIPHER COMPLEX

THE WHAT // Dubbed by the development team as a "hide and seek actioner", *Cipher Complex* follows government agent John Cipher as he sets off in search of a highly sensitive recon satellite somewhere in Siberia. With a real focus on fashioning realistic AI and getting creative with the environments, we're hoping this could offer something a little different.

THE WHO // With a range of titles under their belt, developer Edge Of Reality has an assortment of ideas to draw on while working on *Cipher Complex*. Having cited the industry as having relied on sequels and spin offs for too long, there seems to be a genuine commitment to make sure this original title gets as much attention as possible.

Keeping you bang up-to-date with all the latest game announcements on PlayStation 3

We want it as much as... a baby elephant as an office pet

THE GOOD // *Jericho* has a distinctive look to it – bringing back memories of big budget Eighties horror flicks. If the game does feature a combination squad mechanics and ghosts then this could lead to some real scary gameplay – especially if you build up a rapport with team mates.

THE BAD // People outside games design haven't exactly got a great track record with creating games and games concepts – maybe Clive has a hidden talent in this area. Hopefully the guys at Codies can steer the project in the right direction.

next3
wanted
3/5

much as... Cristiano Ronaldo, a quiet room and a baseball bat

THE GOOD // What's there not to love about *Tekken*. With the command list updates, perhaps a new play mode, and the enhanced grunt of the PS3, we're betting this will look like the best title on the PS3 for a good few months, and if previous titles are anything to go by, we're in for a treat.

THE BAD // There'll always be the dissenters out there, and first up to throw down the gauntlet will be the VF fans. Right behind them will be those folks who think the one-on-one fighter has had its day for the masses, and Namco should give it a rest with titles like *Soul Calibur* and *Tekken*.

PLAYSTATION
next3
wanted
5/5

We want it as much as... an A-team annual

THE GOOD // Silly combat filled with heaps of multi-player fun and intelligent weapon creation system. Slice through a mass of zombies, drop stuff on them or get even more imaginative with the blighters. Of course the multi-player co-op and competitive modes will make it that much more appealing.

THE BAD // It's hardly likely to be a groundbreaking title, and could wind up feeling a little like a modern day *Smash TV* or *Zombies Ate My Neighbours*. Also, the early screens do look a little jumbled at the minute and we don't imagine it'll stretch the PS3 in any way.

PLAYSTATION
next3
wanted
3/5

We want it as much as... a torched Ford Fiesta

THE GOOD // *Need For Speed* has always been a popular franchise, but rarely one that we get excited about. The last iteration, *Most Wanted*, did show a fair degree of innovation, so perhaps we're seeing a rejuvenation of the series. Taking the race to the canyons could make for some exciting races.

THE BAD // Well, it's always been popular, so the need for EA to change the formula isn't high. Also, given that it's out on numerous formats, it's unlikely to be a next-gen title in anything other than looks. The whole 'street' feel probably won't do much to endear us to the franchise.

PLAYSTATION
next3
wanted
1/5

We want it as much as... the attention of our mothers

THE GOOD // Tapping into the best bits of titles like *Hitman* and *Splinter Cell*, a new face in the stealth genre would be a very welcome addition. With a specific focus on the AI and environments, *Cipher Complex* has the definite feel of sleeper hit about it and could be truly different to anything else.

THE BAD // We don't know much about the actual gameplay yet as there are many aspects that the development team is keeping under wraps and there are more than a couple of warning signs. The lead character's name for one, is John Cipher. Sounds a bit like Max Power.

PLAYSTATION
next3
wanted
4/5

newsflashes

Just in...

VIDEOGAME EXPLOSION COMING

The future's bright, the future's licensed

PriceWaterhouseCoopers have produced their latest report on the media sector. Titled "Global Entertainment and Media Outlook: 2006-2010", PwC are predicting a massive upturn in the industry over the next four years. Foreseeing a jump from \$7 Billion in 2005, to \$47 Billion in 2010. This popularity isn't mainly from the west, but Asia. With increased broadband facilities, access to computers, and government promotion the main reasons for this massive hike in the popularity of gaming, PwC envisage that Asia will be on a par with the west before the decade is out. The area of largest growth was the combined regions of Europe, The Middle East and Africa. Driven by "pent up demand" for next-gen consoles and games, PwC noted that the most popular titles in the future will be those based on sports, film and other previously built licenses.

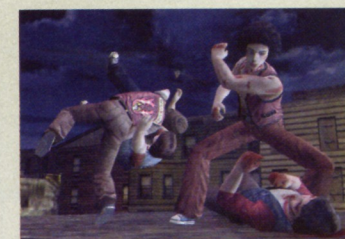


According to PricewaterhouseCooper, franchises like *FIFA* are where the money will be made in the next few years. We could have told you that for 50 quid!

OLD WARRIOR BATTLES IT OUT

Roger Hill in legal wrangle

Gang messiah, Cyrus, AKA Roger Hill, from *The Warriors* is looking to sue Rockstar and publisher Take-Two over an alleged misuse of likeness in the videogame version released last year. Having generated over \$37 Million, *The Warriors* used Hill's likeness numerous times in the game and on marketing materials, which he says is illegal. Roger, who now plies his trade at a New York business college library was asked by Take-Two for his likeness and is now suing for \$250,000 as well as a court order preventing his likeness being used in further titles. According to a Spokesperson for the Publishers however, Take-Two "has a valid third-party licence for the rights to use Roger Hill's likeness and the character of Cyrus in *The Warriors* videogame..." We'll let you know the result.



newsflashes

just in...

2K SPORTS BACK IN PLAY

NHLPA stunt EA
exclusive license

The National Hockey League threatened to put a stop to any ice hockey title when the NHLPA announced an exclusive agreement with EA, effectively locking 2K Sports out of the licensed market.

Thankfully for 2K Sports, a division of Take-Two Interactive, those lovely folk at the NHL put a stop on the deal, changing the deal to a non-exclusive one, leaving the door open not just for EA's NHL '07, due to headline on the Xbox 360, but 2K Sport's NHL 2K7, a likely PlayStation 3 launch title. The deal was eventually endorsed by both association heads and ended amicably without the danger of an embargo on the licence, which is quite a relief.



Next gen licensed hockey titles could have been the sole domain of EA Sports. Thankfully, the 2K series is still set to appear on the PS3.

NHLPA STUNT EA EXCLUSIVE LICENCE

Massively multi-player
online cash cow

In 2005, the online gaming market was valued at \$3.4 million according to analysts DFC Intelligence. If DFC are to be believed that figure is set to rise to over \$13 million by the year 2011, assuming we haven't all succumbed to some alien invasion. The biggest winners are to be massively multi-player titles that make their money from a smaller group of dedicated super-geeks such as *World Of Warcraft* players, who pay subscriptions. While PCs have been seen as the dominant force in online gaming, the introduction of the PS2 and Xbox online services have prompted analysts like PWC and DFC to suggest that by the end of the decade the next-generation of consoles will be looking to challenge for that position.



The future of online gaming, according to analysts is on the shoulders of subscription titles like *WoW*.



PS3 SHIPS

The PS3 conveyor belt starts rolling

THE SHIPMENT HAS begun. PS3's are, as you read this, moving around the world on their way to Sony Computer Entertainment Inc, if reports from both Apple Daily and Commercial Times newspaper are to be believed. The more astute among you will realise the implications of this: that many of the recent reports of Sony's PS3 manufacturing troubles have been overplayed, the PS3 is very much on target for a November launch, and the well documented diode problems aren't nearly as problematic as many would have you think. Of course this is great news for all of us drooling PS3-owning wannabes, but just how many are being put out?

Asustek Computers, amongst the most sizable computer and console manufacturers has reportedly started shipments of PlayStation 3s, and was in receipt of 200,000 component sets as of June, meaning that – if our maths is

correct – a whole 200,000 units have been produced. A larger amount is expected in July, and yet more in September and October, totalling well over one million per month by the time of the PlayStation 3's launch in November.

Sony's not-all-that-generous promise of 2 million units come the launch date is looking well on target then, but what does that mean for us UK buyers? Our best estimate is anywhere between 130,000 and 200,000 units. Not many.

That said, with Sony swearing to get at least 4 million by the end of the year, and a further 2 million by March the following year, the more desperate among you should be able to get hold of one fairly soon.

As well as Asustek Computer, Foxconn Electronics and Taiwan's Hon Hai Precision Industry are set to be creating the console on a demand basis, but are not currently producing the console.

If reports are to be believed, by the time you read this there could be anything up to 1 million of these bad boys in existence.

NBA TO JAM UP YOUR PS3

Regular ESPN updates with EA

WITH EA'S LATEST

announced collaboration with ESPN, the PS3's appeal as a multimedia hub is getting greater and greater. The announcement that ESPN will be delivering their Sports Centre Updates every 20 minutes is old news, but in addition to this the stateside sports news company will also be offering live streaming podcasts and ESPN clips set to be updated every hour, allowing you to keep up with all the US sports action you want. It's EA's massive presence in the sports sim genre that allows them to clinch these types of deals, and no doubt with more in the pipeline, we're waiting to see just how far EA can use the PS3's online capabilities.





DEVELOPERS FACE PORTING PROBLEMS

Xbox 360 developers admit that PS3 ports are difficult

YOU WOULDN'T KNOW it to look at us but we're pretty clued up here at Next3 – for example we know that nothing good comes for free, a problem shared is a problem halved and that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush (why does that sound so perverted?) Perhaps we should stop there; what we're trying to say is that we're not stupid. We are fully aware that with the arrival of the 'next-generation' of consoles the videogame ways of old aren't simply going to disappear leaving us with unique, enjoyable and exclusive games with every new release. With game development costs growing to monstrous proportions it doesn't take a genius to realise that the big money is to be made in multi-format releases.

So that does it then, refresh a few of the old franchises, make them shinier than a greased seal and bang them out on both PS3 and Xbox 360 – then just wait for the coloured paper to start filling pockets. That might well be a publisher's dream but it's not the reality as in a recent Ars Technica interview, Xbox 360 developer Matt Lee points out that porting games between the two systems might be rather tricky: 'I think that porting from the Xbox 360 to PS3 will be

reasonably difficult, since the Xbox 360 has a more general processing power that can be flexibly reallocated, and all of the Xbox 360 CPU cores have equal access to all the memory.' The geek speak continued, 'The asymmetric nature of the Cell could easily lead to situations where the game has too little of one type of processing power and too much of another.'

Certainly not good news for those hoping to play some of the (admittedly very few) decent Xbox 360 on your PlayStation 3. But of course the Xbox 360's trio of general-purpose processors may pose an equally significant problem when attempting to tackle a game based around the PS3's Cell design. Throw multi-threaded graphics engines and physics routines into the mix and it only makes things much more complicated, so if publishers are going to have to invest a great deal of time and money in porting games from one system to another perhaps we will see less multi-platform releases and more console-exclusive games. The good news for PS3 gamers is that many developers have already announced that the PlayStation 3 will be their lead development format. Result.



✦ The Xbox 360 architecture is a fairly traditional set up of processors.

✦ While the PS3's radical Cell processor requires specific programming to take advantage of all that extra power.

The Green-Eyed Monster

What chance these 360 games on PS3?

The news that porting games could be a tad more difficult than expected is both a blessing and a curse, on the one hand there'll be more exclusivity between consoles but on the other we could miss out on some of the Xbox 360s better offerings. Not that we're jealous or anything 'why have hamburgers' and all that but here are a few we'd like to see ported onto PS3...

	ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION A little late in the day, maybe number five will be alive on PlayStation 3.	2/5		PREY We'll have <i>Portal</i> soon enough but this would make certainly a great bedfellow.	3/5
	GEARS OF WAR No chance at all, this is supposed to be Microsoft's PS3 killer and won't ever grace Sony's new black box.	0/5		BIOSHOCK Word has it that Take 2 is horny for the PS3 so we could well see this or a follow-up game shocking the PS3.	4/5
	DEAD RISING There's certainly a chance – due for release on the 360 in September; if it's successful the zombies could invade PS3.	3/5		LOST PLANET Could 'find itself' on PS3 if it doesn't get the cold shoulder from 360 gamers. Any more puns? Nope, we think that's it.	3/5
	CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN Not set for release until later next year this could well side with Sony.	4/5		FABLE 2 After shelling out so much for Lionhead we're sure Microsoft isn't going to share.	0/5
	DEAD OR ALIVE They're big, they're bouncing up and down! It's a bit too much to expect to tempt all busty beauties over to our side.	0/5		HALO 3 You already know the answer.	-1/5

The Month In Numbers

Just the figures maam..

- 2** New *Star Wars* TV shows.
- 5** Of six major film studios backing Blu-ray.
- 6** Games included in the big bumper *Half Life* package.
- 10** Years that the Tokyo Game Show has been going.
- 15** Predicted amount of PS3 launch titles.
- 33** Predicted percentage of PS3 sales over the Wii.
- 50** Minutes it takes to burn 25Gb with Sony's first Blu-ray burner.
- 40** Players in *Resistance: Fall Of Man's* multi-player mode.
- 65** Inches. The size of the largest plasma TV available to man at the moment.
- 75** Price of PS3 games in Canadian dollars.
- 150** Amount in pounds sterling that Sony wants PS3 deposits to be.
- 1,000** Gigabytes which can be stored on Matteris's new holographic storage medium.
- 2351** Adults surveyed in Harris poll, putting Sony as most trusted company in the world.
- 150,000** Amount of PS3's Sony dismissed as UK launch allocation.
- 200,000** PS3's reportedly produced at time of writing.
- 2,000,000** PS3's available at launch
- 70,000,000** Pound Sterling that the UK loses to consoles being left on standby.
- 80,000,000** Amount in Yen of Sony's recent loan. The first in some years.
- 29,900,000** Yen Sony has been ordered to pay back to Japanese government.
- 100,000,000** PS3's Sony expects to sell over the course of its life.

the hot3 list

THE TOP TEN BESTEST THINGS IN AUGUST

THIS MONTH'S
HAPPY
HAP-HAPS
ALL IN ONE
PLACE - SOAK
UP THE JOY

01 NEXT3 LAUNCH

With months of preparation, the best writers and enough meetings to numb our collective asses for a few weeks, Next3 launches. It's everything you could ever want in a magazine: ruthless, unbiased opinion, in-depth reviews and previews and comprehensive coverage of everything PS3. Find a better magazine and we'll give you your money back.*

* Money back guarantee not applicable to anyone, alive or dead and may not include any return of monies whatsoever.



02 HALF LIFE 2 ANNOUNCED

The news that *Half Life* and its portal variant is hitting the PS3 would be cause enough for us to prance around the office high-fiving each other until our hands get sore, but the addition of four other titles on the disk is something that is likely to put a smile on the face of even the most miserable gamer.



03 SONY BRAND NO.1

It's official, Sony is the most trusted brand in the world, for the seventh year in a row, beating companies like Dell, Apple, and Coke. Quite exactly how they did that is something of a mystery, have you ever had a bad can of Coke - we trust Coca Cola implicitly.



04 REGION FREE GAMING

One of the most joyous proclamations this month. Region free gaming means the breakdown of barriers, and many more options when it comes to buying your games. We're all for this, as it should significantly reduce the burden faced by those little convenient bits of plastic we keep in our wallets.



05 BLU-RAY LAUNCHED

The recent announcements that Blu-ray is up and running, with the PS3 leading Sony's charge to make it the dominant force in storage is something well worthy of note. With so many of the big film studios behind it, it looks like Sony might actually win this battle after numerous failures over the years.

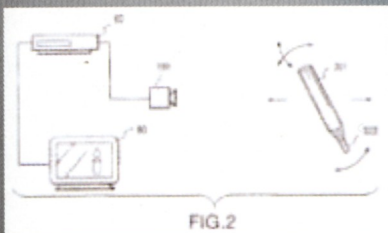
06 DAVID JAFFE HINTS AT GOD OF WAR 3

Despite our previous ramblings about David Jaffe being bored of the epic, story driven genre of games, he's recently hinted at a third title to round off a trilogy of action adventure titles. He's yet to finish his PSP project, and it's far from guaranteed that he'll be at the helm of the conclusion of *God Of War* though, so we're right either way.



07 EYETOY TECHNOLOGY PATENTED

Having submitted a patent for what looks to be the new Eyetoy controller, or derivative, SCE has managed to get us revved up about motion capture gaming. What we've seen of it looks quite remarkable, and where previous camera systems have had to rely on more than one camera to map in 3D, this technology will put you in games – literally.



09 DEV KITS THE SIZE OF PHOTOCOPIERS

Proving just how much you're getting for your money, our discovery that PS3 development kits are the size of small garden sheds is something of a revelation. Actually they're more like the size of a photocopier, but you get the point – all that juicy goodness in one package that doesn't require Argos' free home delivery service.

10 NEW PANASONIC HD TV ANNOUNCED

A TV is not just a TV anymore, it's a lifestyle choice. If you're the kind of person that doesn't choose, but demands, you'll more than likely be interested in the announcement that a 65 inch (that's approximately the height of Associate Ed Keith) plasma 1080p HDTV is on its way from Panasonic. Get online and check out this bad boy, it's called the TH-65PX500.



newsflashes

Just in...

THQ IN FLAMES

Publisher sets up new development studio

Having collected some of the loose development personnel strewn about the place, it seems THQ has managed to net themselves quite a hand of top notch development talent. Never ones to miss an opportunity, they've set up a brand new in-house team called Incinerator Games. Formed of members from a range of studios, most notably 989 (original developers of *Syphon Filter*) and Rockstar as well as quality bods from the *Twisted Metal* and *NHL GameDay* series' Incinerator looks to be a quality outfit.

Currently working on the next-gen versions of the Disney/Pixar licence, *Cars*, scheduled for release on the 360 and Wii this Autumn, and with numerous next-gen irons in the fire, we're hoping that this batch of creative veterans can come up with some great IPs in the future.



Midnight Club, an indicator of the kind of quality we can expect of new studio Incinerator.

RESISTANCE IS FUTILE

Mega multi-player announced

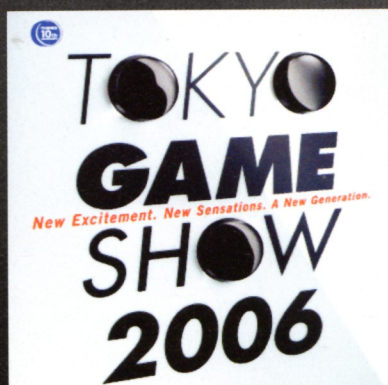
No longer happy with the standard 32-strong multi-player experience, *Resistance: Fall Of Man* developer, Insomniac, has managed to cram an amazing 40 gamers into its online mode – that's a whole eight more players to fall at the end of our razor sharp FPS skills. *Resistance*, due to launch with the PS3 on the 17th November also features a range of multi-player options far surpassing anything we've seen before and environments from icy tundra to treetop villages.

One of the more recent showings of Sony's flagship shooter displayed a multi-player mode that saw players attacking and taking control of tanks of coolant in an effort to disrupt an enemy base's defences and get in to trash the joint. As we've said before, *Resistance* is one to keep your eye on, whether you're a FPS fan or not.



08 TOKYO GAME SHOW

Over 134 companies are set to attend this year's Tokyo Game Show, displaying over 1,700 products. More than 160,000 visitors are expect to attend the show, of which this year's is the tenth. That's a lot of numbers, add them up and send us the sum on a postcard. You might win a trip to the show. Not from us mind.



newsflashes

Just in...

SUITED AND BOOTED

Sony in semiconductor patent scrap



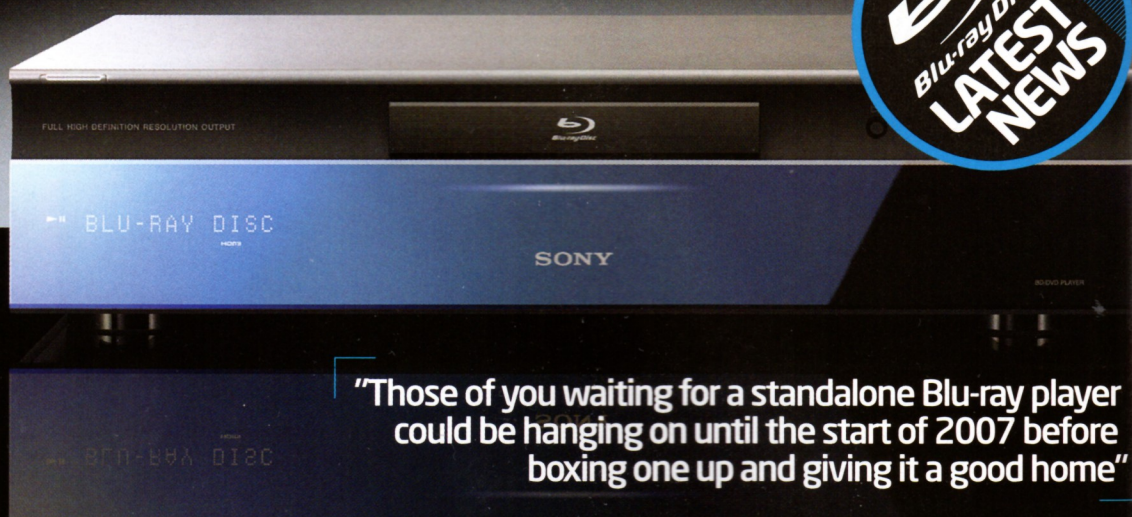
Following on from Immersion Corporation's successful legal action against Sony, the electronics giants has been slapped with another lawsuit. If you remember their previous case, Sony was stung for over \$90 million in damages, due to patent infringement over their DualShock controllers' force-feedback. Now, it seems, it's time for Pennsylvania Agere Systems to get in on the act with a number of claims that many Sony products are impinging on their patents. According to court records Agere has filed a suit against Sony and its divisions for wilful infringement of eight patents across a range of Sony products such as PSP, PS2, PS3, VAIO computers, Handycam, and Walkman. Agere have filed, amongst other things, for violation of their patents for a "wireless local area network apparatus" and "barrier layer treatments for tungsten plugs". Sony denies the claims, stating they have perfectly viable licence to use the patents through a deal with AT&T.

SONY AND APPLE PARTNERSHIP?

Apple logo appears on Sony site



It's not often a Sony PR swears in work time - that's kind of inviting trouble really, isn't it? According to gaming site Joystiq however, a recent case of simple oversight has pushed a Sony US to expletives. What caused this outburst? The appearance of an Apple logo on Sony's official PS3 site. Apparently (we can't see this ourselves) at www.us.playstation.com/PS3/default.html clicking on 'gallery' or 'specs' then using the back button on your browser treats you to a brief flash of the apple logo. Could this be a surreptitious suggestion that Sony and Apple could be in a PS3 partnership? No, apparently it has something to do with the fact that Sony had used a trial version of Apple's Shake program to create the website. Don't worry folks, an Apple/Sony merger is a way off yet. And the PR's uncharacteristic profanity? "That's f***king funny."



"Those of you waiting for a standalone Blu-ray player could be hanging on until the start of 2007 before boxing one up and giving it a good home"

More delays for Sony's next-gen technology

DVD NO SHOW LEAVING CONSUMERS BLU

NOT WANTING TO

glamorise our jobs any more then necessary - of course you already know that we just lounge about all day playing games and being fed peeled grapes by a bevy of shapely beauties - we also get to travel a fair bit. Our most recent visit took us to the States where amongst other things we clapped eyes on our first Blu-ray player. There it was right on the shop shelf, no foolin' and with it a selection of movies all encased in cool little blue (or should that be Blu?) boxes - needless

to say we want one and we want one now. However, the news that greeted us upon our return was one of disappointment and woe as Blu-Ray manufacturers announced that they are still not ready to introduce their movie players to the huge European market.

Whilst currently available in the US and Japan, Blu-ray and its rival HD-DVD have had a rocky start which might well be one of the reasons that both Pioneer and Toshiba (stalwarts of Blu-ray and HD-DVD respectively) have

no concrete release plans for Europe. Those of you waiting for a standalone Blu-ray player could be hanging on until the start of 2007 before boxing one up and giving it a good home because Next3 has it on good authority that the PS3 will be the first Blu-ray player to hit our high streets. A similar time frame has been touted for HD-DVD leaving us to assume that first blood in the next-gen DVD war will be spilt on consoles with the PS3 and the 360's HD-DVD peripheral both out before the year is up.

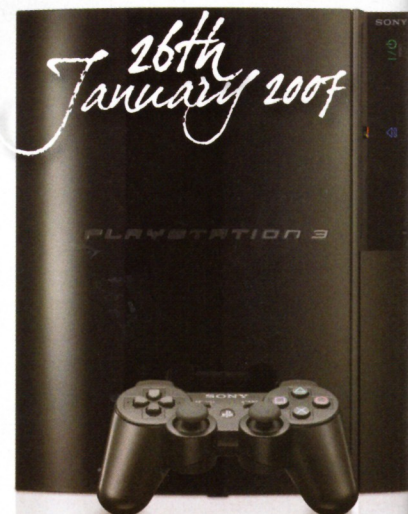
SMALL BUT PERFECTLY FORMED

20Gb PS3 hitting UK early 2007

IN SPITE OF

Sony keeping quieter than a mute with laryngitis on the subject of the 20Gb PS3, this month online retailer Amazon asserted that both versions of Sony's new system would indeed be launched on these shores. Rumour had it that us long-suffering Brits would be deprived of the down-sized SKU but according to the jungle-loving website the 20Gb or 'Standard' version of the PS3 will be released in the UK on 26 January 2007 but as yet no price point has been given.

Of course until we receive official confirmation this is still speculation and while the option of a cheaper unit would benefit consumers in terms of choice we have to wonder if it's really desired seeing as though it's missing Wi-Fi, HDMI and a whole host of other slots and pins. Ever since launch Microsoft has been trying to convince gamers that its Xbox 360 'Core' package is a wise purchase but with sales slipping it appears gamers view the Premium package as the only 'true' system. Will this low-end unit really help Sony win the next-gen console war or just deprive us of precious space on which to store our game saves and dodgy foreign porn?



WIPEOUT WORLD TOUR

New games, no surprises



WITH ALL THE RECENT TALK

of developer redundancies and studio closures due to the high cost of next-gen development it's good to know that Sony is looking to provide for them and their hungry families. Gone are the days of developers watching Jeremy Kyle all morning in anything with an elasticised waistband, while eating beans straight from the can as SCEE is currently looking for several new designers to 'realise the future of *WipeOut* on PS3'.

It comes as no surprise to learn that Sony is planning to bring *WipeOut* to the PS3 considering the success it has enjoyed on the PS2 and the impact *Pure* made on the PSP. It's been almost two years since a new iteration of the futuristic franchise surfaced and given it's abilities to sell units faster than

cakes at fat camp a PS3 version was never in doubt – but what might lift an eyebrow or two however is that Sony is also recruiting for a next-gen football title. If we were to have a punt on the identity of the beautiful game in question we'd have to say it was *World Tour Soccer*, which has also performed well on the PSP. Formerly known as *This Is Football*, a series that was played off the park by efforts from Konami and EA, this recruitment drive could well signify Sony has got up, dusted itself off and intends to use the PS3 as a launching pad for another first-party football game. Then again judging by some of the antics witnessed during the World Cup it could just as easily be a new fighting franchise – Zidane verses Materazzi, ready... fight!



DARTH BECOMES HIM

New Star Wars game confirmed for 2007



WITH THE MOVIES FINISHED

and *Star Wars* overlord George Lucas banished to the ranch fluffing his beard and thinking up new ways to permanently scar his beautiful creation, it should come as no surprise to learn that a new SW videogame is

on the way. At the Licensing International Trade Show in New York last month Lucas Licensing not only revealed record profits of \$3 billion in world wide retail sales but also how it plans to build on that lofty figure next year.

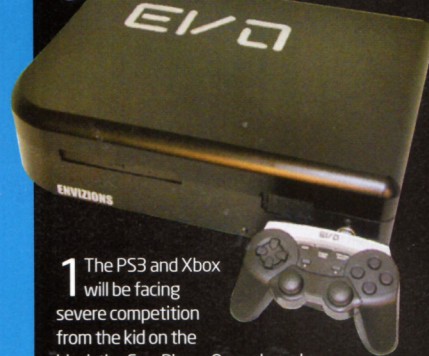
Along with the release of *Lego Star Wars II* and the 'un-special edition' DVD trilogy, *Force*

fans can look forward to a 30th anniversary videogame later next year as well as both a CG-animated and Live-action *Star Wars* TV show. Whether or not this new 'anniversary' game will have anything to do with the Darth Vader game that is also rumoured to be in the works is still shrouded in darkness. Whatever LucasArts has in store for us we just hope this new game will enable us to assume the role of Anakin, travel back to *Episode I* and punch ourselves repeatedly in the face before doing a number on Binks.

"Whether or not this new 'anniversary' game will have anything to do with the Darth Vader game that is also rumoured to be in the works is still shrouded in darkness"

RUMOUR CONTROL

Grade A Internet tittle-tattle



1 The PS3 and Xbox will be facing severe competition from the kid on the block the Evo: Phase One, a brand new console capable of playing PC and Evo games as well as serving as your one-stop, upgradable media centre.

Rating: 1/5

■ Whilst the Evo: Phase one has a press site (check out www.envizionsinc.com/ for more details), we're not entirely sure it has the marketing grunt to compete with the big boys. That and the fact it's just a PC in a box.

2 A new footy title is in development by Sony. The football game will take the name of the PSP title, *World Tour Soccer*, as the *This Is Football* franchise has been deemed unsuitable for the next generation.

Rating: 4/5

■ Seeing as job postings have been out for some time advertising positions on a next-gen football title, we rate this quite high.

3 Sony is looking at delaying the PlayStation 3 until nearer Christmas to allow them to change the look of the controller and casing as well as sort out some issues they've had with some components.

Rating: 2/5

■ Rubbish. It's true that Sony have been having trouble with getting enough diodes for the PS3, and there are bound to be some nasty supply issues, but as for a release date, we're pretty sure it'll stay as it is.

4 Sony is working on integrating the DualShock feedback system into the new PS3 controllers by creating a wrist attachment, thus avoiding the clash of technologies.

Rating: 2/5

■ It's more possible Sony will simply incorporate the DualShock Technology straight into the controller itself once they work out how to mix the two without screwing up the motion sensor.

5 Many big name developers are pulling out of the next-gen market citing sky-high costs as the reason to halt development of many titles.

Rating: 2/5

■ While costs for the PS3 are significantly higher than previously, the rumour that Track7 Games had cancelled *Theseus* due to spiraling costs turned out to be a joke.



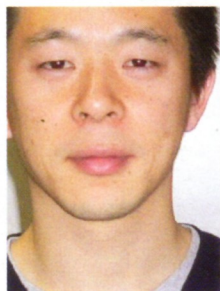
Game: Sonic The Hedgehog

SHUN NAKAMURA

DIRECTOR, SEGA



"I feel that these days, people have difficulty feeling joy and excitement in their daily lives. One of my plans is to let people feel that excitement and joy through this game"



INFORM

Name: Shun Nakamura

Company: Sega

Role: Director

Fact Finder: Some of Nakamura's previous work includes *Samba De Amigo* and *Billy Hatcher And The Giant Egg*.

Tell us three words that describe your game.

- Speed
- Reality
- Next-generation

This 'next-gen' *Sonic* is being made to commemorate his 15th anniversary, but does that mean it's more about the old than the new?

- It's true we've been developing the title by going back to Sonic's roots – looking at his previous games and main characteristics, however, that does not mean we're trying to recreate old games, we're trying to give gamers a new *Sonic* but with some of the classic elements.

What makes your game truly next gen?

- I think the 'reality' is the most obvious aspect, next-gen consoles have so much more power than current-gen ones can so can make everything look much more realistic. In this title, Sonic will be interacting with humans and the movement of objects appear even more amazing. Also, throughout this adventure, when Sonic runs it will make players feel as if they themselves are running at full speed. This is something that definitely couldn't have been achieved without this new technology.

What challenges did you face making a game for Sony's new system?

- Everything is a challenge for us at the moment, but getting the chance to meet this challenge and not knowing what the limits will be is a very exciting thing for us creators and it has been a very fruitful and exciting experience.

What does Silver the Hedgehog bring to the party?

- The fact that Silver comes from the future is one of the main elements in the story. In terms of scenario as a whole,

he's a very important character in terms of story and gameplay. The supernatural powers he has at his disposal are completely different from Sonic's, helping him in combat and to solve puzzles, so there's certainly plenty of variety.

Can you give us one OMG moment from the game?

- This is a very difficult question. The feature that I think will give people an OMG moment is probably *Sonic's* Super High-speed mode. Of course there'll be many others as we hope to provide as many of these moments as possible – so there's a lot to look forward to.

Other than previous *Sonic* games what were the main influences behind the game?

- Of course, we are always impressed by other games and evidence for this can best be found in the Town Stage – it's basically a combination of many different types of game. To be honest, we try to look at as many games as possible in order to give our games greater depth, but the principal influence for this game was the original *Sonic The Hedgehog* title.

What part of the game makes you smile/cry?

- The most exciting moment is when something new actually starts moving in the game. This is when I get very excited. This time, there'll be new moves and action for Shadow and Silver too. The new facial expressions that can be created now are really good too ... yes, they make me smile.

Did anything get left on the cutting room floor?

- We've tried to implement as much as possible in the game and we haven't given up on any ideas just yet!

What balance has been struck between speed, action and exploration?

- Focusing only on speed, adventure or

action alone would be very easy. Since Sonic is a character that contains all of those features, however, we wanted to maintain a balance in order to implement all of the features and make them as attractive as possible. From that point of view, we are currently working as hard as we can to maintain a good balance through the entire game.

What was your main focus when starting development and has the game changed from your original vision?

- When we first started the development of this title, the possibilities for next-generation games were endless. We're currently at the point where we have to decide how we can develop the game overall – we have to face reality in terms of how to organise, schedule and maintain the quality of the game instead of dreaming about all the possibility that the console actually contains.

Sonic was a massive hit for Sega 15 years ago, do you think he can be that successful again and how will this game help him get there?

- We know that it's going to be a very challenging time for us, but we have to make it a success and so are doing as much as possible in order to achieve that. Not only do I think the sheer size of the game will impress people, but the amazing sense of speed as well. The title is already looking great at the moment and we've still got a long way to go.

How will your game change the world?

- What a surprising question. I feel that these days, people have difficulty feeling joy and excitement in their daily lives. One of my plans is to let people feel that excitement and joy through this game.



SONY STILL THE WORLD'S BEST

Ken's company on top but he's left feeling down...

THOUGH PEOPLE MIGHT

not be too happy with the price of the PlayStation 3, when it comes to brand quality those four letters still mean a great deal. A fact highlighted this month by the results of the Harris poll, an online survey of consumers 'best brands'. The final figures show that Sony has taken the top spot for the seventh consecutive year – in fact, since 1996 Sony has been the number one brand nine times only losing twice to Ford. The Harris poll was conducted online, with 2,351 US adults being asked to name what they thought was the best brand – unaided and without a list of brand names present. While perhaps not directly connected to videogames, we're certain that the PlayStation must have contributed a great deal to the result.

Microsoft found itself on the list last year, but couldn't manage to muster enough votes to break into the top ten this time around – and with all those overheating Xbox 360s we can't say we're surprised. Apple also manage to make its presence felt. Nevertheless, how this bodes for PlayStation 3 is uncertain. While Sony's stellar reputation might go some way to compensating for the high price point, we can't assume that those polled will be rushing out to pick up a console – perhaps the results of next year's poll will be a good indication of Sony's success with PS3.

HOW DO KEN?

While the Sony brand maybe riding high, unfortunately the same can't be said for its president Ken Kutaragi who, in a recent article published in *Business 2.0*, was getting

about as much love as Cristiano Ronaldo at a National Front rally. As an addendum to its '50 People Who Matter Now' article, the magazine published a list of ten people who don't matter, and Sony's president was given the dubious honour of being on it.

Business 2.0 remarked that Sony is setting itself up for a fall with the PS3 and Blu-ray. "Unfortunately, PlayStation 3, which is supposed to put Blu-ray into millions of living rooms, is months late and hundreds of dollars more expensive than competing consoles from Microsoft and Nintendo – largely because it includes one-of-a-kind technologies like Blu-ray. The delays and cost overruns are likely to make both PS3 and Blu-ray non-starters." Must we remind the jabber-mouth publication that Blu-ray has the support of 90 percent of Hollywood's studios, oh and that lies make baby Jesus cry.

HARRIS POLL RESULTS

- 1 Sony
- 2 Dell
- 3 Coca-Cola
- 4 Toyota
- 5 Ford
- 6 Honda
- 7 Hewlett Packard
- 8 General Electric
- 9 Kraft Foods
- 10 Apple



NEXT 10 PEOPLE WHO MATTER

Inspired by *Business 2.0*'s ingenious article, we've compiled a list of the people who are important to us...

- 1 You, the reader – we gotta get paid!
- 2 Subway employees – mmm, Subway Melt
- 3 Robocop – the world needs law and order
- 4 David Hasselhoff – singer, actor, good hair, this guy's got the lot
- 5 Our mum – She still does the ironing
- 6 The A-Team – we'd hire them if we could find them
- 7 That girl in the office, who looks like she'd do dirty things to us – rock on
- 8 Chuck Norris – he's a one-man murder machine
- 9 Lindsay Lohan – Herbie told us she puts out
- 10 Ken Kutaragi – Don't cry, Ken, we'll look after you

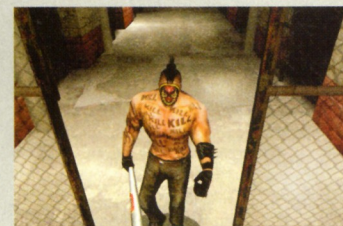
newsflashes

Just in...

I AM THE LAW!

No objection to videogame law course

The University of La Verne College of Law, California, which has been lecturing on aspects of gaming law since 2002, is set to create an entirely new academic programme based on the field of videogame law, a fast-growing section of the judicial system. In charge of the new course is Professor Ashley Lipson, the man responsible for revolutionary software such as the *Objection!* series which teaches students how to react in the court room, and *SicPro!* a collection of games to enhance students' understanding of courtroom procedures and skills. The course covers Multimedia Law, The Law of the Computer Games Industry, and The Law of Cyberspace. Anyone interested can read up on the subject at <http://law.ulv.edu/index>.



With more trained lawyers dealing with the legal wranglings of titles like *Manhunt*, the cases should be dealt with much quicker.

ALL ABOARD

PS3 to play every PlayStation title ever – amen

We all know there are oodles of games in the PlayStation stable, but testers at IBM have revealed that Sony has managed to achieve 100 per cent backward compatibility. In previous tests that figure was always high, around the 99.99 per cent mark, with only 40 titles not compatible. Sony bosses, clearly not happy with that, rejected the console until the 100 per cent mark had been reached. In a recent chat with Reed's Electronic News, Tom Reeves, vice president of semi-conductor and technology at the PS3 chipmakers emphasised the point by saying, "Sony is very concerned about quality and backward compatibility. They want to get this right." Well, who wouldn't? Compared to Microsoft, in terms of backward compatibility, Sony seems to be well ahead with Xbox having a around the 300 mark.



Look, we all love *Final Fantasy VII*. You'll be able to play this on your PS3. Great!

nextmedia the **BIG** screen

*High-definition
gaming at its best*

NEWS: ▽ SONIC TEAM Q&A // **THE BIG SCREEN** // PS3 PRE-ORDERING ▲

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PLAYSTATION
next 3



SCALING NEW HEIGHTS

METAL GEAR SOLID 4

OUT: TBA 2007

ABOUT // Hideo Kojima's final *Metal Gear* game (as director, at least) will complete the *Solid Snake* trilogy. The recently released trailer suggests that Solid will actually take his own life at the end of the game, ending the Big Boss bloodline once and for all. Of course, this being Kojima, there are bound to be a few twists before we see Solid's eventual demise.

Anyway, the game is set shortly after the events portrayed in *MGS2*, with a reformed Foxhound organisation battling against a Revolver Ocelot/Liquid Snake-controlled mercenary army, an army that rivals the US military for size.

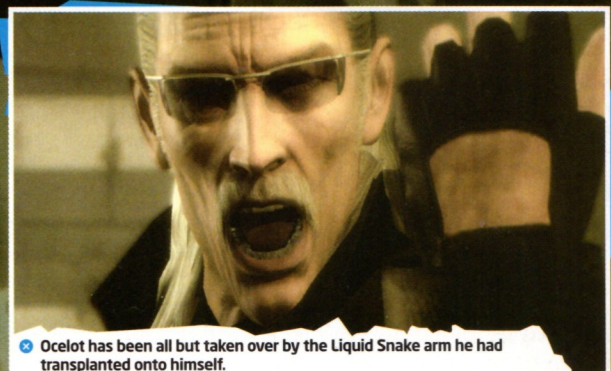
Returning characters are plentiful with Naomi Hunter, Meryl Silverberg, Otacon and an all-new cool Raiden playing their parts, and the rumours are that it'll be set in Zanzibar Land, an homage to the first *Metal Gear* game.



✕ Meryl from *Metal Gear Solid* returns as a fully fledged member of Foxhound.



These all-new Metal Gears combine robotics with living tissue. They are cyborgs, if you will.



✕ Ocelot has been all but taken over by the Liquid Snake arm he had transplanted onto himself.

newsflashes

just in... COWABUNGA!

Fresh new heroes in all new game

 Turtles fans rejoice. Not only have you got a CGI feature-length movie to look forward to, but Ubisoft has announced its intention to create a brand new *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* videogame. Those people holding their head in their hands, groaning at the prospect of another sub-par title based on our favourite childhood heroes/reptiles/ninjas should stop now, as this version is set to mirror the movie rather than use the frankly dire engine of the previous few *Turtles* titles. Whilst there have been no concrete details on the game, we've been assured that there will be close involvement from the creators of the movie to assure a quality production. Slated for a March '07 release, to coincide with the movie release, we'll have more from the heroes in a half shell as it comes in.

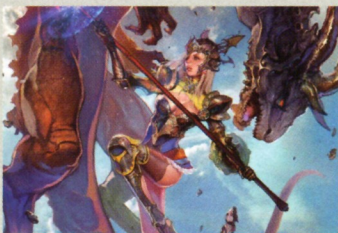


✓ Some of the Next3 team are old enough to remember when they were 'Hero Turtles'.

ENDLESS SAGA OVER BEFORE IT'S BEGAN

MMORPG cancelled for PS3

 We have to be honest and admit that we really didn't know too much about Webzen's mysterious MMORPG *Endless Saga* but as it turns out we didn't need to. Earlier this month several sources reported that Webzen's online role-playing game had been cancelled and later Jason Wonacott, the developer's director of corporate communications released a statement saying "The product has been cancelled. It was a product under review and our headquarters in Seoul has decided to cancel their development on the product to focus on games like *Soul Of The Ultimate Nation*, *Huxley* and *APB*. We still have a relationship with Sony and we will be bringing titles to the PS3." We hope the decision was not a result of the allegedly high development costs for the PS3.



✓ We'll never know if the game would have been endless or not.



✓ *Devil May Cry 4*: One of the title scheduled for a playable demo at this year's Tokyo Game Show.

KEN DOES TOKYO

Kutaragi heads up this year's TGS

SONY Computer Entertainment boss Ken Kutaragi is set to make the keynote speech at this year's Tokyo Game Show. His keynote speech this year will be titled "Next Generation Entertainment by the PS3". Also delivering a speech will be the chairman of the TGS, who just so happens to be president of RPG giants Square Enix, Yoichi Wada, offering up

his thoughts on "The Game Industry's Potential and Problems". Held on the 22nd of September, this year's TGS will no doubt be a good deal more interesting than ever before for PS3 lovers, with playable demos of *Devil May Cry 4*, *Resident Evil 5* and *Metal Gear Solid 4*. We'll be right there to give you all the latest on both Ken's musings and these juicy new demos.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Sony pressures retailers to up PS3 deposit

IN A REPORT issued by industry insider magazine MCV, Sony are putting pressure on retailers to force customers to lay down a £150 deposit rather than the arbitrary figures chosen by high street and online vendors. This may seem harsh initially, but if you think about it, the scheme is quite sensible as a measure to deal with allocation issues arising from the PS3's entry to the console market. As well as assuring a fairer allocation, it's thought that Sony are looking to avoid the situation that occurred with the launch of the Xbox 360 – the eBay phenomenon. Not to give you ideas here, but with some customers buying upwards of a dozen units and selling them on for vastly inflated prices, the prices on

online sellers went to ridiculous heights, often topping the \$10,000 mark.

While many will no doubt see this as an irritation, what with some UK high streets only requiring deposits of £5, it seems rather self defeating for Sony to do this for any other reason. That said, it's not guaranteed that Sony will get their way, as there'll no doubt be fierce opposition from both GAME and Gamestation, not to mention the independent retailers. As well as the increased deposit, Sony are looking to create a central database of pre-orders to ensure only one PlayStation 3 per household.



PS2 leaking cash ELEC-TRICK

You know that little red light on your PS2? That could be costing you a huge amount of money every year. A report out from the government is claiming that videogame consoles are responsible for over £70 million in wasted energy. Turn it off at night.

newsgrid

GOOD, BAD, EXPECTED, UNEXPECTED - LET'S PUT THE NEWS IN CONTEXT!

MAPPING OUT THE MONTH'S NEWS ON GRAPH PAPER. BECAUSE WE CAN.



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NEWS: ▽ BIG SCREEN // **NEWSGRID** // NEXT GENERATION ▽

Versus! Who's the best father?

Father/son chat

3 6

We imagine most of Heihachi and Kazuya's heart-to-hearts end with a ten-hit combo.

Nappy changing

7 2

Anyone familiar with Heihachi's second costumes will be fully aware that he's quite accomplished with nappies.

Breadwinning

7 6

That alimony cheque must've been enormous.

Footy in the park

2 2

A late, double footed sliding tackle to the Achilles' heel probably isn't the nicest thing for a four-year old to receive.

Pushy fathering

4 6

Heihachi's not the most understanding of fathers when it comes to career choices. Essentially it's "Do what I say, or die!"

OVERALL

23 22

With just a single point in it, Heihachi, by our reckoning, offers a more balanced caring, and considerate upbringing than the leader of the Osbourne pack. Still doesn't stop him throwing his son through three-foot brick walls though, does it.

Father/son chat

3 6

Trying to decipher Ozzy's bizarre tirade of compound swears and fatherly advice would be enough to send any kid crying.

Nappy changing

7 2

We suspect his kids got a very early introduction to piercing with those shaky hands.

Breadwinning

7 6

There's little doubt that Ozzy's brats have never had to eat cold beans out of a tin.

Footy in the park

2 2

At least this match up would be a little more even, with both father and baby with a top speed of around three meters an hour.

Pushy fathering

4 6

With both of his spoilt sprogs springboarding their wet careers from the poor guy's back, we're not sure if Ozzy gives a shit anymore.

OVERALL

23 22

Despite taking over MTV with his particular mix of infamy and foul-mouthed humour, it seems that, judging from our in depth psychological study, Ozzy doesn't do all that well up against the monstrous devil at the head of the Mishima clan.



HEIHACHI

With just a single point in it, Heihachi, by our reckoning, offers a more balanced caring, and considerate upbringing than the leader of the Osbourne pack. Still doesn't stop him throwing his son through three-foot brick walls though, does it.



OSZY OSBOURNE

The Prince Of Darkness, Ozzy Osbourne shot to fame when he paraded himself and his family like some kind of bad hair day freakshow. Of course his talent lays in his ability to chuck out the kind of hellish noise that gets him on around 6 billion heavy metal t-shirts.

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PLAYSTATION
next3

NEW SCREENS

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

The best fighter on PlayStation 3?



ABOUT // Despite flashy hi-res shots of Sega's next-gen slug-fest appearing in just about every Xbox 360 magazine on the shelf, it didn't take long for the big blue to dispel such ridiculous rumours and confirm that *Virtua Fighter 5* was to be PS3 exclusive. As the Xbox fanboys cry themselves to sleep at night, chocolate cake smeared around their mouths, they are all muttering one question. Why, Sega, why?

Well, it turns out that PS3 players will be the only ones to get a piece of the VF action because the development team is already used to working with the NVIDIA graphics hardware. Revealing all in a recent interview, Sega AM2 president Hiroshi Kataoka said that this (teamed with the fact that *Virtua Fighter 4* has already established a fan base on PS2) was a huge factor in the final decision: "There is the fact that VF4 had already been released on the PS2, but another big reason is that the Lindbergh and PS3 GPUs are from NVIDIA, so the technical barriers are low. VF5 is tuned to the limits of the Lindbergh's capabilities, so multiplatform development would have been difficult."

While it might not be as exciting as Gates and Kutaragi duking it out for the *Virtua Fighter* rights in a winner-takes-all best-of-three showdown, it does bode well for future Sega arcade conversions on PlayStation 3.

MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES

Fanning the flames of revolution

ABOUT // Call us cynical old keyboard jockeys (actually don't, it hurts), but in this industry of franchise updates, failsafe formulas and bankable IP there are few surprises. After the success of *Mercenaries* it was no surprise that a sequel was planned. It was not shocking that such a game evoked a few disapproving clucks from sewing circles. What does come as a surprise is when an entire country is accused of acting as a piece of propaganda designed to pave the way for an actual attack.

Set in a North American country and featuring missions based on real events, *Mercenaries 2* was accused by Venezuelan congressmen of being a justification for imperialist aggression. Lawmaker Gabriela Ramirez believes it sends a message to Americans that, "You have danger next door and action must be taken". Pandemic maintains its right to use realistic settings: "Although a conflict doesn't necessarily have to be happening, it's realistic enough to believe that it could happen." Justification for imperialist aggression? Maybe not. An awesome-sounding PS3 game? You betcha.

FIRST LOOK



METAL GEAR SOLID 4

Kojima questions PS3's tilt controller

NEW INFO

ABOUT // We're so ravenous for news on the PS3's premier title, we've been hanging on every single word that's expelled from Hideo Kojima's mouth and we've a funny feeling he knows it. Refusing to give up any new information on *MGS4*, Kojima instead climbed on his soapbox to declare his love for Sony's (and Nintendo's – natch) new console. Speaking in an interview with Japanese Ge-Maga he compared PS3 to a movie theatre, while 360 is like watching a DVD at home, and Wii is a television programme. The *MGS* man went on to add, "If you think about the future of the industry and games creators, I get the feeling

that the winner had better be the movie theatre." Given Kojima's penchant for lengthy cut-scenes perhaps a movie theatre is just the ticket.

Kojima did take issue with the PS3 controller and the loss of the rumble function, even going so far as to say, "The best thing would be a PS3 with controls like the Wii". What this means for the future of *MGS* we're not sure – perhaps he was hoping to have Solid Snake jumping about the screen like some kind of mental, while we dive around the floor trying to avoid on-screen guards. Maybe not, but it'll be interesting to see if any motion-sensor technology is implemented in the final movie... game... oh, whatever.



FINAL FANTASY XIII

SquareEnix's lucky number



ABOUT While we're still wondering how or even if the PS3's motion-sensor technology will be used in *Metal Gear Solid 4*, SquareEnix's Tetsuya Nomura has revealed that *FFXIII* will be fully committed to the cause. "We already have some ideas about how to use it." He offered in a recent online interview. We're willing to bet all that movin' and a-shakin' is linked to the exciting new combat system that's being implemented in the upcoming PS3 game. In fact fellow Square-head Yoshinori Kitase admits that, "At first sight it might seem like an action game... we're trying to use a similar system to what you've seen, but the major difference is that the battle will be speeded up considerably."

Final Fantasy XIII's director Motomu Toriyama who wants to make the fight scenes

look like those seen in *Final Fantasy* movie *Advent Children* has echoed these action-orientated sentiments. "FFXIII attempts to see how far it's possible to make *Advent Children*'s battles into a game." While what we've seen of the action so far does look drool-inducingly pretty it isn't quite up to *Advent Children*'s standards just yet, but there's plenty of time for more spit and polish in the months ahead.

While more than happy to flap their gums about the controller and action sequences, no one is yet ready to reveal anything about the game's female protagonist with Toriyama only offering that though she is female, "this heroine is not that feminine." Make her burn the dinner and watch *Big Brother* for 14 hours a day and she starts to sound rather more familiar.

ASSASSIN'S CREED

Making a killing in the Middle Ages

ABOUT In between online shopping and visiting our (how shall we say?) specialist sites we came across a tasty piece of info regarding *Assassin's Creed*. Word has it that Ubisoft's bright young star will feature co-op missions, downloadable content and be part of a trilogy. Admittedly that's just hearsay, but considering co-op play and downloadable content are fast becoming the norm for next-generation games, it doesn't seem too unlikely that such plans are being made. Dare we dream that co-op play might also feature a Versus mode like *Splinter*

Cell so we can pit Richard the Lionheart against Saladin in a grizzly beat-down resulting in a mangled mess of chain mail and flip-flops. As for the trilogy concept, judging by the ambiguous nature of the game and the suggestion that the main character Altair is either from the future or being controlled by someone in the future then placing him in other historical periods certainly wouldn't be out of the question. In fact, if the gameplay mechanic transfers successfully then we could see a whole slew of *Creed* games on the way which is certainly no bad thing.



PLAYSTATION next3 team most wanted

WHO'S WAITING FOR WHAT...

EDITOR IN CHIEF
NICK JONES



There's nothing quite like a Hideo Kojima-produced trailer to get someone excited about a PS3 *MGS* game. And that someone is me. The fact that it's the final Solid Snake game should be enough to get you excited too. And for the people who don't care about that? Just look at it!

MOST WANTED
METAL GEAR SOLID 4



ASSOCIATE EDITOR
KEITH HENNESSEY



Yes, okay, I've heard it all before – yuck, sweaty men in Lycra dry humping each other to within an inch of their lives – well, that sort of attitude is for the ill informed and narrow minded. *Smackdown* is actually an intricate game of chess played out in the squared-circle... with sweat.

MOST WANTED
WWE SMACKDOWN VS RAW 2007



STAFF WRITER
TOM LECLERC



I've seen a few too many *GTAs* to be genuinely thrilled about the next-gen *GTA* to be honest. I'm concentrating on those games that look to be doing something a little bit different or exploring the boundaries of the PS3. Games like *Mercenaries 2* are doing just that.

MOST WANTED
MERCENARIES 2



WRITER
SIMON GRIFFIN



Despite being rubbish, this series has always had a special place in my heart. Maybe it's the lovingly crafted London streets, the comedy cockney characters, the mindless violence, or maybe it's the tirade of blue language that spews from every character's mouth. Yeah, it's that last one.

MOST WANTED
GETAWAY



WRITER
AARON ASADI



Although I expect the PS3 to fully live up to the hype, there aren't any games that have left me excited... apart from *Assassin's Creed*. From the stunning locale to the *Prince Of Persia* gameplay it has me drooling. For me, the next-generation will arrive the day this hits the shelves.

MOST WANTED
ASSASSIN'S CREED



WRITER
TIM EMPEY



I'm really looking forward to seeing what SquareEnix will do with *Final Fantasy XIII*. I've been a fan of the series for years now and with the graphical splendour of the PS3 it's going to look absolutely amazing and will have an awesome story to play through... hopefully.

MOST WANTED
FINAL FANTASY XIII



newsflashes

just in...

VIDEOGAME RETAIL BUYOUT

US company set to acquire GameStation

You've probably heard this one somewhere before, but it seems to be a rumour that just doesn't want to go away. US goliath GameStop is looking to procure the UK's second largest videogame retailer, GameStation after current owner Blockbuster announced the intended sales of its 'non-core assets'. The recent re-ignition of this rumour was sparked by top market analyst Wedbush Morgan citing GameStop's aggressive attitude to building on its market share, following its recent merger with rival Electronics Boutique last October.

After (yet more) rumours about GameStop's proposed acquisition of GAME, it seems only sensible that the US-based retailer, who has expressed a strong desire to strengthen its presence in the European market, should buy one of the two companies, given their relatively weak existence on our shores. The rumoured deal, which GameStation is refusing to comment on, is reported to be worth \$70 million.

gamestation

GameStation's rumoured buyout by US retailers GameStop should increase their buying power

BLU-RAY VERSUS HD DVD

Buena Vista announces Blu-ray releases

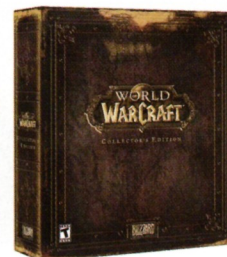
No one can deny the furious competition happening between Sony's Blu-ray and Toshiba's HD DVD formats, but if you were asked to put money down which would you go for. Sony's success in the proprietary storage media arena isn't exactly sparkling what with Betamax, MiniDisc and UMD all falling by the wayside to varying degrees. Blu-ray looks to be the exception to that rule however, with support from five out of the six major studios. The recent announcement that Buena Vista Home Video is set to release a glut of films in September and October strengthens that statement. The studio's films include Walt Disney's *Dinosaur*, *Jay & Silent Bob Strike Back* and *Eight Below*, followed by *Gone In 60 Seconds*, *Glory Road*, *Haunted Mansion*, *The Brothers Grimm* and *Dark Water*. Currently, HD DVD has received support from only three of the big six.



Blu-ray storage medium: Let's hope it fares a little better than MiniDisc, UMD and Betamax.



ABOUT WORLD OF WARCRAFT: 500,000 PEOPLE ARE PLAYING IT ONLINE AT ANY ONE TIME



WHAT IS WORLD OF WARCRAFT?

Put simply, it's the world's most successful online game - RPG or otherwise. When it was launched back in 2004, it became the fastest selling PC game of all time with more than 250,000 copies sold in its first 24 hours on sale. As of March this year, it had over 6 million players worldwide with at least 500,000 playing the game online at any one time. With a monthly subscription fee of \$14.99, you can see why Sony might be interested in getting a version of *World Of Warcraft* on PlayStation 3.

World Of Warcraft is the most successful online game ever with more than 8 million subscribers around the globe.

PS3 WOW?

World Of Warcraft could come to PlayStation 3

AFTER BLIZZARD'S ABORTED *StarCraft: Ghost* project,

few would have predicted that the company would re-enter the console games market so quickly, but it appears that it is looking to do just that. The company, responsible for PC mega-hit MMORPG *World Of Warcraft*, has recently been advertising for a senior producer with, "extensive first-hand experience with Blizzard games." The ad goes on to state that the person needs to have recently made and shipped a triple-A title on current-gen consoles. However, it's the, "Xbox 360, PS3 or Wii production experience," stipulation of the ad that has lead to conjecture that *World Of Warcraft* would be coming to next-generation consoles.

A *World Of Warcraft* game appearing on a next-gen console is certainly a possibility, especially now that it's been confirmed that PlayStation 3 comes with a hard drive as standard. It would also offer a much-needed boost to Sony's ailing online gaming service as it battles for supremacy with Xbox Live. And, as *Final Fantasy XI* has proved it would be possible for console gamers to play directly with and against their PC counterparts.



WOW MOVIE ON THE WAY BUT 'SPIELBERG TO DIRECT' RUMOURS QUASHED

A *World Of Warcraft*-themed movie was announced some time ago now, but has so far only appeared on IMDb as 'Untitled Warcraft Project', due for release in 2008. Rumours recently started circulating on the Internet that Steven Spielberg (yes, he of *Always* fame) was to direct. The rumours appeared to be based primarily on the fact that a) Spielberg has never directed a 'true' fantasy film before (*Hook* is probably the closest he's come) and that b) Universal Pictures, with whom Spielberg has a long-standing relationship, used to be a subsidiary of Vivendi, the publisher of *World Of Warcraft*. However, as quickly as the rumours appeared, Blizzard moved to quash them simply stating that, "No final determinations have been made at this time. We look forward to revealing further details about the cast and crew in the months ahead."



Villainy! Carnage! Exploding penguins!?

Hey guys! We'll keep you up all night ♥

by Etna



DISGAEA 2

Cursed Memories

Available October 2006

12+
TM

www.pegi.info



PlayStation 2



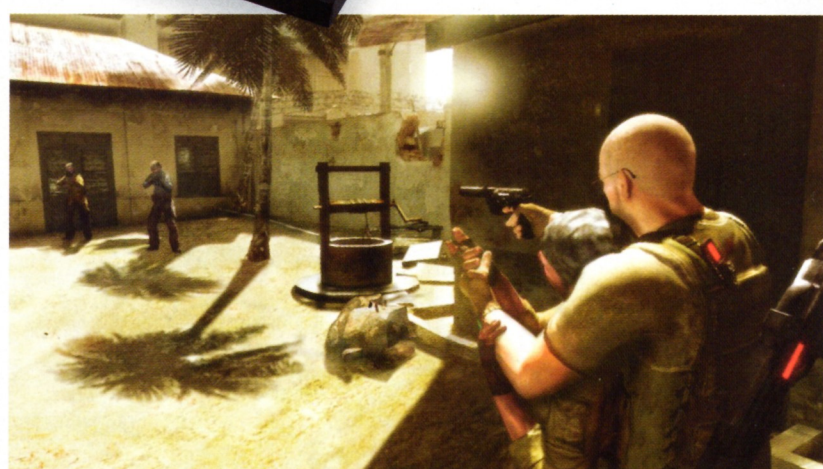
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Helping you plan your gaming future next3 releases

Find out when all the big PlayStation 3 games are coming to a store

RELEASE LIST: ▽ NEWS // RELEASE LIST // CALENDAR ▽



November	
BladeStorm: The Hundred Years' War	Koei
Call Of Duty 3	Activision
Everybody's Golf	Sony
Fatal Inertia	Koei
FIFA 07	EA
Fight Night Round 3	EA
Formula One 2006	Sony
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	Sega
Madden NFL 07	EA
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	Activision
NBA Live 07	EA
Rainbow Six Vegas	Ubisoft
Resistance: Fall Of Man	Sony
Ridge Racer 7	Sony
Sonic The Hedgehog	Sega
Splinter Cell: Double Agent	Ubisoft

Stranglehold	Midway
Tony Hawk's Project 8	Activision
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	EA
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	Ubisoft
WarHawk	Sony
WWE Smackdown Vs RAW 2007	THQ

December	
Genji 2	Sony
Heavenly Sword	Sony
MotorStorm	Sony
Rayman Raving Rabbits	Ubisoft

Q1 2007	
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	Ubisoft
The Darkness	2K Games
Medal Of Honor: Airborne	EA

2 sense

Summing up games to the power of two

Sonic The Hedgehog Old School



SingStar Gay Bar F.E.A.R. Pant Soiler



Rainbow Six Vegas Six Shooter

Resident Evil 5 Giving Evils

Spider-Man 3 Central Parker

Tony Hawk's Project 8 Bird Watching

Gran Turismo 5 Rubber Up

Metal Gear Solid 4 Snake Charmer

Hellboy Hand Job



TBA 2007

Afrika	Sony
Alone In The Dark: Near Death Investigation	Atari
Armored Core 4	From Software
Army Of Two	EA
Assassin's Creed	Ubisoft
Casino Royale	EA
The Club	Sega
Coded Arms Assault	Konami
Codename: Avalon	Climax
Colin McRae: DIRT	Codemasters
Devil May Cry 4	Capcom
Dirty Harry	The Collective
Dynasty Warriors	Koei
Eight Days	Sony
Elveon 10tacle	Studios



Games that should be on PS3!

Although there are plenty of games on the release list to choose from there's always room for one more. With an envious eye on the competition, here's one we'd like to see on our side of the fence sooner rather than later...

Crysis (PC)

With reports that Crytek – maker of the stunning *Crysis* game – has advertised job vacancies for PS3 programmers, we wouldn't be doing our job properly if we didn't use this information to start wild rumours about *Crysis* heading for PS3. Crytek has not mentioned anything other

than a PC version, and the job might just be to develop a PS3 compatible version of the nifty CryEngine 2 to aid the sale of the licence. But if this is indeed the case then why not go all the way and give us *Crysis* on PS3? Yes, that sounds better... Shh, *Crysis* is coming to PS3 pass it on.



Key game Liable to slip Could be dodgy

PS

you



Stranglehold

Picking up where John Woo's *Hard Boiled* left off, *Stranglehold* sees Inspector Tequila back on the streets of Hong Kong. Expect it to contain more than its fair share of guns, blood and milky-white doves.



next³ Essentials

Plan ahead for PS3's essential...

Racing Games

Colin McRae: DIRT

1 The Mc daddy returns to shred some next-gen mud



Formula One 2006

2 Guaranteed to leave you with skid marks



Ridge Racer 7

3 You'd be stupid to miss it... And you're not stupid are you?



MotorStorm

4 Looked great, then bad, now pretty darn awesome



Need For Speed: Carbon

5 Chavs toss your grime-stained baseball caps to the skies in jubilation



MOST WANTED

We quite like these games, how about you? To have your say log on to the Next3 forum and vote on the games you want to see make the list. Go to www.next3.co.uk to join in.

Next3 Top Ten

- ☐ Resident Evil 5
- ☐ Metal Gear Solid 4
- ☐ Grand Theft Auto IV
- ☐ Assassin's Creed
- ☐ Tekken 6
- ☐ Resistance: Fall Of Man
- ☐ Heavenly Sword
- ☐ Virtua Fighter 5
- ☐ Devil May Cry 4
- ☐ Final Fantasy XIII

Reader Top Ten

- ☐ Metal Gear Solid 4
- ☐ Grand Theft Auto IV
- ☐ Assassin's Creed
- ☐ Ridge Racer 7
- ☐ Tekken 6
- ☐ Resistance: Fall Of Man
- ☐ Resident Evil 5
- ☐ WWE Smackdown Vs RAW 2007
- ☐ SingStar
- ☐ Genji 2

Eyedentity	Sony
The Eye Of Judgement	Sony
F.E.A.R.	Vivendi
Fifth Phantom Saga	Sega
Final Fantasy XIII	SquareEnix
Final Fantasy XIII Verses	SquareEnix
Frontlines: Fuel Of War	THQ
Getaway	Sony
Golden Axe	Sega
Grand Theft Auto IV	Rockstar Games
Gran Turismo 5	Sony
Gundam	Namco
Haze	Ubisoft
Hellboy	Konami
Indiana Jones	LucasArts
Interstellar Marines	Zero Point Software
Killing Day	Ubisoft
Lair	Factor 5

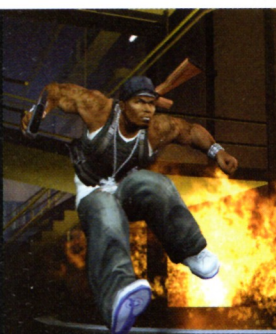
Mercenaries 2: World In FlamesPandemic

Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns Of The Patriots	Konami
Monster Hunter 3	Capcom
Monster Kingdom	Sony
Monster Madness	SouthPeak
Need For Speed: Carbon	EA
Ni-Oh	Koei
The Outsider	Frontier
Project Offset	Offset Software
Resident Evil 5	Capcom
Romance Of The Three Kingdoms	Koei
Sega Rally Revo	Sega
SingStar	Sony
Spider-Man 3	Activision
Stuntman 2	THQ
Tekken 6	Sony
Thesis	Track 7
Turok	Buena Vista Games
Unreal Tournament 2007	Midway
Virtua Fighter 5	Sega
Virtua Tennis 3	Sega
The Wheelman	Midway
World Snooker Championship 2007	Sega

Growing Pains

Fed up of mother/wifey/life partner constantly moaning? Now it's our turn

When we look at the release list, our first reaction is positive. We've even suggested laminating these pages to prevent the flow of saliva from pulping the paper. So when a game industry big shot starts to bemoan the lack of creativity in today's games, it grinds our gears. So, which gaming big wig has been rattling cages this month? It's Vivendi CEO Bruce Hack who, in an interview with industry paper MCV, pulls the industry up for its shortage of exciting ideas. Shouting down from his high horse he said: "I looked around E3 and I saw too much of the same. I wouldn't allow us to do that. I'm trying be a pain in the ass hassling our people for creativity." He must have missed half the demos we saw because we left very excited. Still, they can't all be as creative as *50 Cent: Bullet Proof*, eh?





Whether it's games, Blu-ray releases or PlayStation 3 downloads, stick with us and you won't miss a trick this month...

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	
6		8	9	10 Get To It By buying this magazine you have entered into an agreement to purchase the next 46 issues. Might as well subscribe now or we'll send the boys round.	11 AmeCon 2006 The University Of Leicester invites gamers and fruity folk alike to dress up as your favourite characters and attended a Cosplay ball.	12
13	14 CD Release Radiohead - The Document. Feeling a bit too happy? Not to worry, Oxford's most depressing warblers are back to bring a little sadness into your life. Seriously, though, we love 'em.	15 Blu-Ray US Release The Big Hit Blackhawk Down Memento RV Robocop Sense And Sensibility		17	18	19 Premiership Kicks Off Enjoy the first game of the new season in glorious HD... Please take our money Sky Sports we don't want it.
20	21  EIEF Edinburgh Interactive Entertainment Festival 21-22 August 2006	22 Edinburgh Interactive Entertainment Festival Normally renowned for its comedy, Edinburgh gets to host a games festival too. Get yourself over there and check out PS3 games in the making.	23 Blu-ray US Release Silent Hill - Get lost in a world of human sacrifices, mutated corpses and guys with pyramids for heads. It's as disturbing as Sean Bean's American come Irish come rubbish accent.	24	25	
26	27	28	29 CD Release Jay-Z - Greatest Hits. The man who retires more times than an F1 driver releases his farewell album. You'd better get it quick his new record will probably be out soon.	30	31	



Team Talk

What's everyone looking forward to in August?



NICK

The start of Premiership football is always one of the major highlights of any year, but the first ever broadcasts of it in high definition? Awesome.



TOM

I went to the EIEF last year and managed to blag my way into the Nokia after party/BBQ, after a depressing evening entirely devoid of food and girls I wound up in my hotel room with a packet of ginger nuts and a La Senza catalogue. Never again.



KEITH

Bonus! Robocop is easily the best film of 1987. Well, if you don't count Predator that is. 'I'd buy that for a dollar'... Genius



Back In The Day

Looking back at PlayStation past

We're not *all* about the future; sometimes it's good to take a glance at where we've come from. So we've summoned up 1.21 gigawatts and traveled back to this month in gaming history and brought you some information you didn't know (and will probably never need to)...

FIVE YEARS AGO

AUGUST 2001

Lead actor for *Final Fantasy X* announced as James Arnold Taylor who went on to provide the voices for Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars: Battlefront II* and *SpongeBob* spoof *Wooldoor Sockbat* in MTV's *Drawn Together*.

TEN YEARS AGO

AUGUST 1996

Cumulative sales of PlayStation reach 7.2 million units worldwide with Europe accounting for 1.6 million of that figure - which is coincidentally exactly the same amount of people trying to get shot of it on eBay today.



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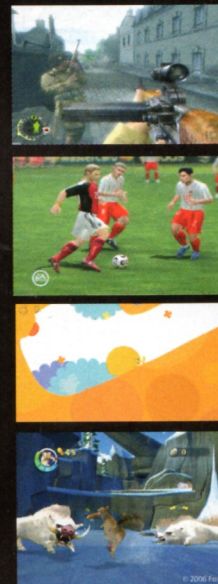
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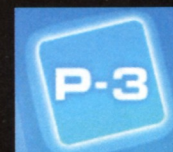
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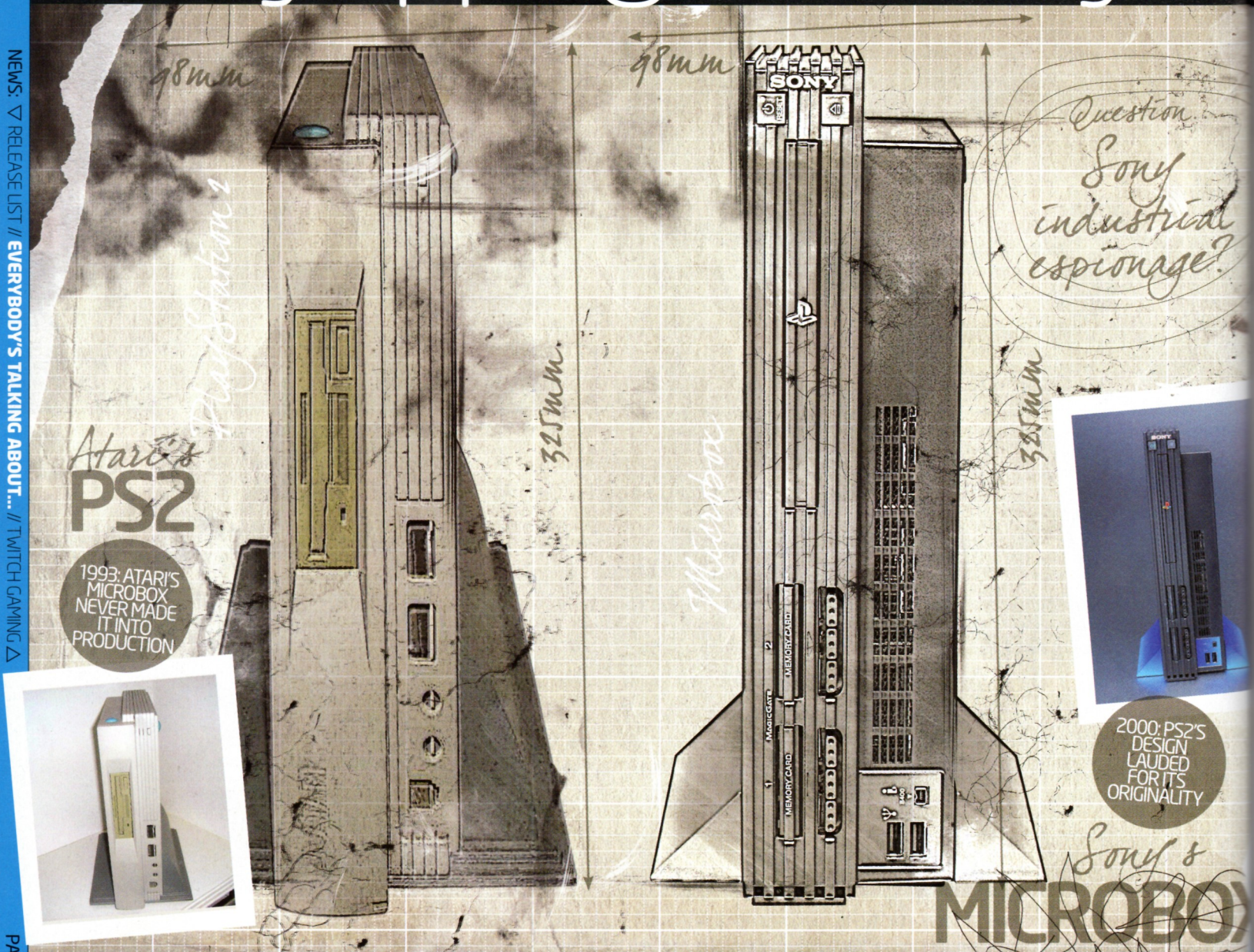
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talking about...

Dousing
today's burning
issues with
the petrol of
opinion!

THE COMPANY
ACCUSED OF STEALING
HASN'T THAT ALWAYS

Sony ripping off everyone

NEWS: ▽ RELEASE LIST // EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT... // TWITCH GAMING ▽



Sony's greatest innovations: THINK SONY ISN'T A COMPANY WITH A HISTORY OF GREAT INNOVATIONS? THINK AGAIN

1955

The release of TR-55, Japan's first transistor radio



1968

Trinitron TV launched. Double the brightness of regular TV



1971

U-matic VTP, the world's first home video cassette player



1975

Betamax, the first home video cassette recorder



1979

Walkman



1982

The world's first CD player makes its debut



AT BROUGHT US PLAYSTATION STANDS
G OTHER PEOPLE'S GAMING IDEAS - BUT
EN HOW THE GAMES INDUSTRY WORKS?

else's ideas

SONY A quick search on any of the more popular videogame forums will turn up at least one topic that derides Sony for its lack of originality when it comes to console design. Many stop short of accusing the company of downright plagiarism, but most cite the recent unveiling of the PlayStation 3 tilt controller as proof that the company does little to innovate and simply copies the good ideas from everybody else.

David Yarnton, the head honcho at Nintendo UK, has not held back on openly accusing Sony of reproducing others' ideas. "Historically we're always developing new things. We know Sony has had a lot of issues with its rumble feature and has had to withdraw it - they didn't innovate, they copied."

These accusations were answered by Sony's Phil Harrison, "In a certain way, I understand why people would say [these things], but it is stupid, if you'll forgive my saying so." He went on to say that PS3's motion-sensitive controller had been in the works for some time. "The controller has been thought about since about 1994, but in reality you can't make some of the ideas that we have because the technology is not available in sufficient quantity or at a low enough price, and you kind of have to wait for certain things to converge. We had the concept of PlayStation Portable for many years before we could actually deliver it at a price and at a standard that was acceptable. The controller is obviously a surprise to the industry. We've been thinking about it for a while, but it's a relatively recent addition to the format. We

didn't show it last year, because we weren't ready to."

Whatever the case, even the Wii's tilt mechanism isn't exactly original - the first instance of a motion-sensing controller (in a form that we would recognise today) was actually Microsoft's Sidewinder Freestyle Pro, released back in 2001. Nintendo itself pioneered using the technology for videogames with the NES's Power Glove back in the early Nineties. But there have been other accusations concerning Sony copying its rivals' ideas - the unveiling of PS3's XMB (Cross Media Bar) and its OS at this year's E3 confirmed that there would be a 'Friends' option - not too dissimilar to Microsoft's Friends List feature from Xbox Live. And rumours abound that the company will use Xbox Live as a template for its own revamped online gaming service.

The fact of the matter is that, in this industry everyone copies everyone else's ideas. It's an industry of evolution, not revolution - just look at the evolution of the game controller. Almost every company that has produced one has contributed something to the overall design: Nintendo with the D-pad, Sony with ergonomic design, Microsoft with the perfection of the button-and-stick layout. Hardware - or software for that matter - habitually evolves with time. Technology becomes more advanced (and more affordable) and so new ideas are introduced. The key is how that technology is used.

In this respect, you could split Nintendo and Sony up into two camps. Nintendo

Evolution not revolution

Why invent your own stuff when you can just use the best bits that other people came up with?

IDEA	ORIGINALLY APPEARED ON:	HOW DID SONY USE IT?
Vibrating controller	Nintendo 64 as the Rumble Pak	Putting two vibration motors into the 'arms' of its controller created the DualShock controller
Shoulder buttons	SNES controller	Added them to its original PlayStation controller but included two more of the things. Nice one
Analogue control	NES Max controller	Put two of them on its DualShock controller and added the R3 and L3 buttons, activated by pushing the stick in
Gamertag and Friends List	Xbox Live	This has yet to be confirmed, but a similar system is rumoured to be in development for PlayStation 3's online gaming service
Tilt control	Microsoft's SideWinder controller	Similar technology has been incorporated in the PlayStation 3 controller
The game console	Probably a Nintendo invention	Sony stole it from Nintendo! Yah! Boo! Sucks! Give it back! or it developed the idea into the world's greatest games console, the PlayStation 3

"The controller has been thought about since about 1994, but in reality you can't make some of the ideas that we have because the technology is not available"

Phil Harrison, Sony UK



1984

Ladies and gentlemen, the first portable CD player



1992

MiniDisc is launched



1994

The PlayStation



1999

Albo, the first robotic entertainment dog, is born



2002

Blu-ray format invented



2003

QRIO: the world's first running, talking and seeing bipedal robot



nextmedia everyone's talking about...

Sony ripping off everyone else's ideas

PlayStation = innovation

How Sony has brought its own special kind of innovation to the videogames party

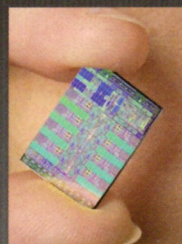
Backwards compatibility

A few older consoles featured expensive add-on packs to enable compatibility with older games, but PS2 was the first console that did it straight out of the box. Now everyone's doing it.



Hard drive

Yeah, yeah, the Xbox came with one as standard, but the first console to have a hard drive? The PS2, of course. It was only ever released in Japan and the US, but its legacy can be seen on the European PS2's Network Adaptor which still has the letters 'HDD' imprinted in it.



The Cell processor

The revolutionary new chip at the heart of PlayStation 3 (developed in conjunction with IBM) has eight separate processors controller by a master processor. This makes the chip extremely efficient and great for... well, processing data.

DVD Video

It seems unthinkable now that a games console wouldn't come with some sort of video playback feature, but PS2 was the first to do this - paving the way for the multimedia-capable consoles that we have today.



Multimedia

Actually, let's talk about that too. PS2 was the first console to feature USB ports enabling you to hook up all manner of devices such as printers, mice, keyboards, digital cameras and so on.



EyeToy

If this had been a Nintendo product, the world would have gone mad for EyeToy, proclaiming Nintendo as the world's most innovative videogames company. As it was this webcam mixed with motion sensor technology enabled (and continues to enable) some pretty innovative games. Who needs the Wii's motion sensor controller, anyway?



Analogue buttons

First appeared on the PS2's DualShock 2 and could sense some 100 or so variations of pressure. Used to great effect for racing games (*Gran Turismo 3* especially) and in *Metal Gear Solid 2*.



Memory cards

Before memory cards, the world relied on cartridges and password systems to save your progress in games. Thank you, Sony!



Dual analogue sticks

An ancient NES controller may have been first with analogue control, but the PSOne controller was the first to incorporate two, making, among other things, first-person shooters a decent prospect on consoles.



Ergonomic controller design

Controllers had been streamlined before, but not to the extent of the original PlayStation's controller. Designed to rest comfortably in the hands rather than be held, this controller set the standard for all future designs.

Custom music

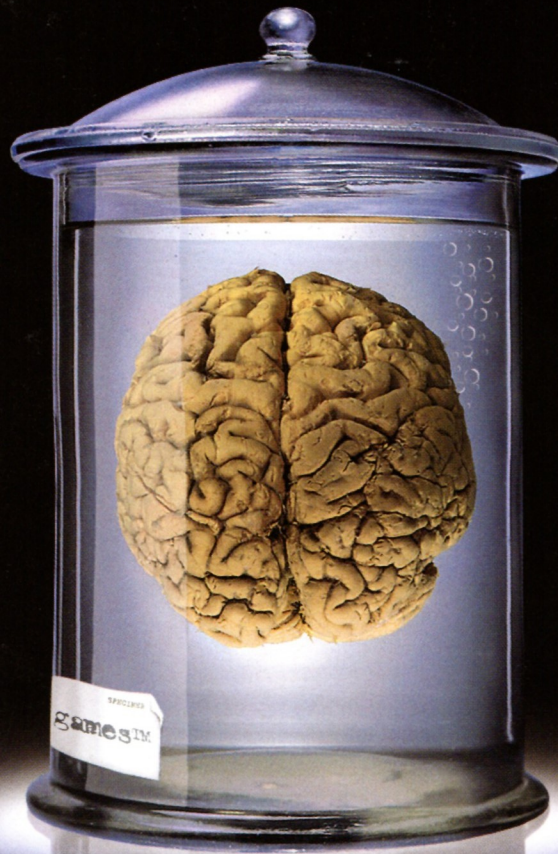
Contrary to popular belief, the Xbox was not the first console to feature custom soundtracks, it was the PSOne (with a copy of *Ridge Racer*). By selecting an option just before going to a race, you could switch the game disc with an audio CD and play along to any music you liked.



tends to introduce something new and tells the world, 'This is our new controller. This how you use it. These are the kind of games that we want you to develop for it.' That's probably why the best games on Nintendo consoles are almost always first-party games. Sony, on the other hand, tends to have a more open development policy with technology - it introduces it and then lets people get on with it.

Purely as a contributor to videogame hardware development, Sony can hold its head up high. It was the first company to introduce DVD as a storage medium, memory cards are now utilised by all game consoles (yes, even Nintendo ones) ever since Sony introduced them along with the original PlayStation, and EyeToy is the kind of gaming innovation you might expect serial innovator Nintendo to come up with.

Sony's real legacy of innovation can be seen in the kinds of people that now play videogames. Through a combination of quality titles, a quality product and some inspired marketing, Sony changed the gaming demographic forever and as a result made the PlayStation brand the most powerful in videogames today. Now, wouldn't Nintendo and Microsoft just love to be able to copy *that* idea?

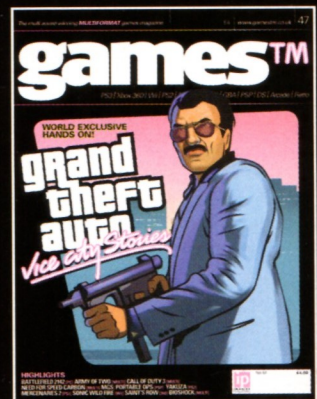


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TwitchGaming

Thoughts, imaginings and opinion from
Next's resident columnist, Twitch

I remember a few years back how a group of game developers tried to emulate Danish filmmaker Lars Von Trier and his contemporaries by coming up with a videogames version of *Dogma 95*. The idea behind *Dogma 95*, in case you missed this one, was a manifesto that was designed to encourage filmmakers to create films that didn't conform to the norm, in effect creating new and original films and reinvigorate the film industry.

Sadly, the videogame version (called *Dogma 2001*) didn't have quite the same impact that *Dogma 95* did – to my knowledge no videogames were ever created that conformed to the manifesto. Which is a shame, because it promised things like, "If a game is representational rather than abstract, the colour black may not be used to depict any manmade object except ink, nor any dangerous fictitious non-human creatures," and that, "There shall be no knights, elves, dwarves or dragons. Nor shall there be any wizards, wenches, bards, bartenders, golems, giants, clerics, necromancers, thieves, gods, angels, demons, sorceresses, undead bodies or body parts, Nazis, Russians, spies, mercenaries, space marines, stormtroopers, star pilots, humanoid robots, evil geniuses, mad scientists, or carnivorous aliens. And no freakin' vampires."

So I was thinking: now that we're on the cusp of a new generation of PlayStation gaming, wouldn't it be great if someone tried it again. Not the same (most of *Dogma 2001* goes too far) but something that would weed out lazy development and encourage developers to use PlayStation 3's technology to its full creative potential. I mean, aren't we all sick to the back teeth of games like *Realistic Racing Modding Game 4* and *Generic Platform Adventure 2007*?

So here is my next-gen gaming manifesto. Let's get all publishers to sign up for it.

1 There shall be no good and no evil depicted in the game. Life isn't black and white so neither should videogames. By all means discuss notions of what good and evil is, but don't put bad cowboys in black hats and enemy soldiers in Nazi uniforms.

2 No crates shall appear in said game. As handy as crates are for containing pick-ups and for use as cover from enemy fire, they are the biggest gaming cliché ever. Crates should be banished from videogames forever.

3 No character can have a health bar; health packs should therefore be unnecessary. Please think of another way of representing damage – how about by the way a character performs or how well he/she sees? Also, where can I get these miracle health packs from?

Dogmatic For The People

Sign up for my next-gen gaming manifesto!

4 No loading times. There's nothing more likely to shatter your immersion in a game world than a loading bar popping up every time you go through a door.

5 Non-player characters will not walk into walls (unless they're drunk). Let's have characters move around and act in realistic ways, or at least in ways that make you wonder if they really are computer-controlled characters.

6 No cut-scenes or cinematics. Videogames aren't movies! If you want to make a movie then make one, don't ruin my game. If you pick up a controller you expect to interact, not watch. If there's a story to be told, do it interactively.

7 No indestructible hedges. Or anything else for that matter: doors, ice, windows, bodies... things should behave in the videogame world how they should in the real world.

8 It's the players' game and not yours. Remember: this is the experience of the player and he or she should be allowed to do as he/she likes. If a problem can be solved one way then let them do it that way, not just the way that you decree.

That ought to do it. I'm not averse to the odd sequel here and there – in fact many great games don't become great until their second or third iterations – but let's at least set off in the right frame of mind: to create new gaming experiences that are worthy of the world's most powerful games console.

Twitch

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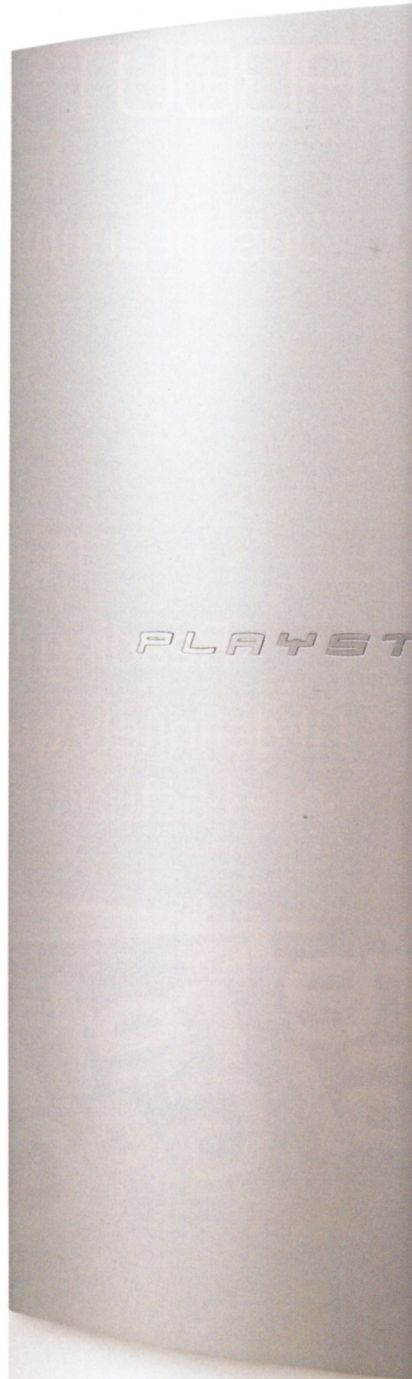


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N, ANYONE?

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Four hundred and twenty five pounds. Come 17 November, it's likely that a good percentage of you will be parting with this sum in exchange for Sony's impressive tub of electronics, the PlayStation 3. You might pay by debit card, credit card or cash, but ultimately it's going to come down to a transaction for little under £500. Some will experience nerves as the purchase is made. Questions that previously hadn't crossed your mind will be busying about your brain like a goldfish in a test tube – 'Is it really worth it?' 'Maybe I should wait a bit for it to come down in price.' 'Is it really going to be as good as Sony has made out?' 'Why am I excited about playing games at 720p when I don't even have an HDTV?' 'Why is a Blu-ray drive so important to me – I don't even have any Blu-ray movies to play on it?' 'Is it really that much better than an Xbox 360?' In truth, all these doubts will be justified, as £425 is a lot of money, and when all is said and done, the PlayStation 3 is simply a toy. It just so happens to be the greatest toy of all time.

Annostation

Which does what and all that

Backwards Compatibility

1 As with PS2, PlayStation 3 will be backwards compatible. Rather than do this through emulation software, however, Sony has built a PS2 into the PS3 ensuring that 99 per cent of PS2 and PSOne titles will work on the console. This will also mean that you can use your PS2's EyeToy with your PlayStation 3.

Colour

2 At E3 2005 the PlayStation 3 was demonstrated as having three looks. The silver version was the most prominent at the show with the black and white versions taking a back seat. At E3 2006, however, it was announced that the PS3 will only be released in the black version (well, more specifically, two black versions) with other colours to follow. It is expected that the silver version will debut in March 2007.

BD Drive

3 Using a rather sexy front-loading slot mechanism (much more futuristic than a flimsy tray), PlayStation 3 supports every optical format available (with the exception, of course, of the dirty, filthy HD DVD). These include, Blu-ray Disc, DVD, CD, SACD, CD-ROM, CD-DA, CD-R, CD-RW, DVD-ROM, DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD + R, DVD + RW, BD-ROM, BD-R and BD-RE. Bloody hell.

Media Bay

4 There hasn't been a single shot of the lid lifted on the media bay yet, but Sony is keen for us to know what's going on under the hood anyway. There will be ports here for the Memory Stick Duo, SD Memory and Compact Flash. Transferring data from machine to machine has never been easier, a fact compounded by the PlayStation 3.

USB 2.0 Ports

5 Where would we all be without USB ports? As well as being able to attach USB devices, such as memory sticks, MP3 players, cameras, printers and - oh yes - keyboards, the USB ports will be used to recharge the PS3 controllers. Incidentally, there were originally two more USB 2.0 ports at the back of the PS3, but it seems that Sony has deemed them surplus to requirements.

HDD

6 The PlayStation 3 comes with a 2.5" hard disk drive, which slots in at the base. This is going to become the centre of your world for the next decade. It will store movies, music, photos, TV shows, game saves and downloadable game content. It is also necessary for you to play games. Famously, it will come in two sizes on 17 November, 20GB and 60GB, and there are already plans to have a 120GB one available next year.

HDMI Out

7 At the moment you can fetch an HDMI cable for around £80. That's £80 for a cable. This alone should tell you just how impressive this connection is, giving you unprecedented picture and sound. While PS3 can still output HD without it, an HDMI port is widely accepted as the only means of receiving 'true HD'. Also, the PS3 will be running HDMI 1.3, which means that you will be able to view your movies and games in 'Deep Color', the highest standard currently possible. In the original design there were two HDMI ports meaning that the PS3 could feasibly be played on two HDTVs, but now there is only the one port on the 60GB version and it is completely absent on the 20GB.

Ethernet Connection

8 The gateway to the future of videogaming, the Ethernet port is what enables you to get online with your PS3, which means you won't be having any of that downloadable content or online multi-player gaming without using it. The most impressive thing about the connection is that it's built to handle up to 1GB broadband bandwidth, which is a phenomenal amount - approximately 100 times bigger than the top bandwidth in the UK. On the original designs for the PlayStation 3 there were actually three of these, although quite what that would offer (go on the Internet twice, simultaneously?), we don't know.

Digital Out

9 Quite simply, the Digital Out supports all the digital sound formats through the relevant decoder, which include Dolby 5.1, DTS and LPCM. Initially, the PlayStation 3 was reported as being able to support Dolby 7.1, although that no longer seems to be the case.

AV Multiout

10 You'll be familiar with this one, as it was the main 'out' used for the PlayStation 2. It's a standard connector port for your TV although this one does support screen resolutions 480i, 480p, 720p, 1080i, and 1080p. Essentially, the effectiveness of this port means that an HDMI port won't be necessary to watch movies or play games in the highest resolution possible, although the HDMI port does offer more in terms of colours and crispness.

AC In And Main Power

11 Hardly the most revolutionary element on the PS3, but without it you'd be screwed. Say hello to the power input port, which is very similar to a standard PC's (see, it is a computer).



The Specifications

Product name		PLAYSTATION®3	
CPU		Cell Processor	
GPU		RSX™	
Sound		Dolby 5.1ch, DTS, LPCM, etc. (Cell-based processing)	
Memory		256MB XDR Main RAM, 256MB GDDR3 VRAM	
HDD	2.5" Serial ATA	✓ (20GB)	✓ (60GB)
I/O	USB 2.0	✓ (x4)	
	MemoryStick/SD/CompactFlash		✓
Communication	Ethernet	✓ (x1 / 10BASE-T, 100BASE-TX, 1000BASE-T)	
	IEEE 802.11 b/g		✓
	Bluetooth 2.0 (EDR)	✓	
Wireless controller (Bluetooth)		✓	
AV Output	Screen size	480i, 480p, 720p, 1080i, 1080p	
	HDMI OUT		✓ (x1 / HDMI NextGen)
	AV MULTI OUT	✓ (x1)	
	DIGITAL OUT (OPTICAL)	✓ (x1)	
BD/DVD/CD Drive (Read Only)	Maximum Read Speed	BD 2x (BD-ROM) DVD 8x (DVD-ROM) CD 24x (CD-ROM) SACD 2x	
Dimensions		Approximately 325mm (W) x 98mm (H) x 274mm (D)	
Weight		Approximately 5kg	

It seems strange to think that only a year after PlayStation 2 had taken over the world's shelf space, Sony had begun working on its successor. Aside from making you ponder as to whether it'll do the same for PlayStation 4 next year, it also illustrates just how much time has gone into this latest electronic adventure. For over six years Sony has been designing its super console, readying it for what could prove to be the most crucial era in videogame history, the remaining three giants of the sector, Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo positioned for a battle that surely won't see them all come out of unscathed. Someone is going to have to lose and someone is going to have to win, and Sony has been ensuring that it's the best equipped for the fight ever since you finished your fist lap on *Ridge Racer V*.

It would of course be foolish to think that the PlayStation 3 Sony had in mind back in 2000 was the same as the one soon to be taking pride of place in your front room. Technology is advancing at a tremendous rate, and it's becoming more and more difficult to predict just how the consumer electronics scene is going to develop. Some may scoff at the notion that the mighty Sony didn't know exactly what

it was doing with the PS3 since day one, but the fact of the matter is that the consumer climate has changed dramatically since the early days of the PS2. Back in 2000, DVD players were still an extravagance few could afford, and while PS2 played a huge part in bringing the format into the mainstream, it took a good while for the shiny discs to dethrone videotape as the most popular way to watch films. Now, DVDs are commonplace enough to be sold for £1 at Tesco, and even grandmothers are used to navigating menu screens. The same goes for the MP3 revolution, which has seen the end of the portable CD player and MiniDisc Walkman. Back in 2000, there was no real sign that things would go this way, and yet here we are, with you probably reading this with an iPod stuffed in your jacket pocket. These are changes that would have affected Sony's masterplan in some way or another, redirecting the development of the next-generation console.

Then of course there's how the videogames themselves would have shaped Sony's vision of the future. The recent surge in peripheral-based gaming's fortunes – with *Guitar Hero*, *Buzz*, and *SingStar* leading the way – is as clear an indicator as any as to how games are now more accessible to the mainstream than they were 20,

Taking Control

Say hello to your little friend

It is still unclear whether or not Sony ever had any intention of releasing the banana-rang controller, and the design still has many divided as to if it really was that ergonomic. All that is irrelevant now though, because the PlayStation 3's official controller has been unveiled, and it looks exactly like the DualShock2. However, despite the aesthetic disappointment, there's still plenty to talk about, not least of which is the motion-sensing function.

Analog Sticks

1 In the same position, rather disappointingly, as PS2's, but that's not as big a problem as some are making out. The PS3's analog sticks, like the face buttons, have a greater degree of sensitivity than their predecessors, although it's doubtful that they will prove as decent as Sony's rival's controllers as there is still a lack of grooves for the sticks.

The LEDs:

3 As there are only four LEDs here and only four USB 2.0 ports on the PS3, we can safely assume that the plans for seven controllers to be connected to the PS3 have ended. The LEDs will indicate battery life levels and how many players are connected to the console.

The Shoulder Buttons

4 While the L1 and R1 buttons remain the same visually as they were on the DualShock2, they too have had a 2-bit increase in sensitivity. A much more noticeable change, however, has been reserved for the R2 and L2 buttons, which are now triggers. These will no doubt be used predominantly for racing games as similar ones are on other consoles.

The PS Button

2 With a very similar function to the PSP's 'home' button, the PS button will enable you to flick back to the PS3's menu immediately. Aside from the USB mini-b connector, this is the biggest visual difference between the PS3 controller and the PlayStation2 one.

The USB Mini-b Connector

5 Where you connect your controller to the PlayStation 3 for charging. The controller has a built-in rechargeable battery, which lasts for 24 hours, and you can play games while the controller is recharging.

The Face Buttons

6 Sony's new controller was always going to feature the iconic T, S, O and X. For the most part these are identical to what we experienced on the PlayStation 2, although the sensitivity has been cranked up from 8-bit to 10-bit.

The Bluetooth Function

7 People had thought that because the 20GB PS3 lacks a Wi-Fi function, the controllers wouldn't be wireless. However, the controllers don't use Wi-Fi, but are in fact supported by Bluetooth. This transfers data at a much faster rate than Wi-Fi so the chance for lag will be much less here than it would have been otherwise.

7

Motion Control

Up And Down

A The first two of the six degrees of the motion the controller will feature. This will simply require you to move the controller up and down along the vertical axis. Could be used for simpler actions, such as scrolling through your arsenal.

Pitch

B Essentially a tilt function which has you flick the control pad forward and back. This will most probably be used in flight sims such as *WarHawk*, as it will be a rather natural way of dipping and lifting the nose of your aircraft.

Roll

C The opposite of the pitch, the last two degrees of motion will have you rotate the controller left and right. Use for this is less obvious, although all the controls together could act as a joystick for something like *WarHawk*.

"The guiding principle has been to combat the accelerating nature of the entertainment industry, and it seems Sony has managed to successfully diminish the chances of being bested over the next decade"

ten, or even five years ago. The fact that Nintendo's new console, the Wii, is built around this philosophy simply confirms the industry's general lean toward this style of gaming. We also shouldn't forget what some consider to be one of the PS2's greatest successes, the EyeToy, a brilliant a videogaming device that was sure to have further convinced Sony that the industry was a much different place now to what it was back in the PSOne's heyday. Again, these factors would have considerably changed Sony's outlook regarding what a next generation might actually be.

Online gaming would have had an even bigger impact. By Sony's own admission, Microsoft's Xbox Live service has lead the way for console gamers looking to play online. Over the past four years or so, the service has been a shining example of what online gaming could be. Sure, it still didn't have the numbers PC MMORPGs experienced, but as a package Xbox Live was and undeniably is excellent. Excellent enough, in fact, to have many PS2 owners rue the inadequacies of Sony's Network Play, a half-hearted, lacklustre attempt from Sony to entice its tens of millions of gamers online. PlayStation 2 may have achieved worldwide dominance in terms of sales, but when it came to online gaming it was definitely second place. This concession, together with the broadband boom, would have been one of the major influences on Sony's new console.

These changes have all had as big a role in creating PlayStation 3 as Sony's wizardry with electronics, and it'd take a brave man to argue against that. The vast, sweeping developments the videogame industry, and indeed the home entertainment industry, has experienced since the introduction of PlayStation 2 cannot be underestimated in terms of influencing the creation of PlayStation 3. The whole culture of mainstream electronics has changed, all of a sudden everyone is Dolby literate and desperate to get their hands on progressive scan DVD players. HDTVs

are flying off the shelves almost as quickly as MP3s are being downloaded from Apple's iTunes, and getting a hi-def signal is now only second in matters of importance to getting a phone that's also a Walkman and a TV. Sony is set to record a loss well in excess of £500 million in the year following PlayStation 3's release, and it isn't going to do so without having taken on board the major changes that have shaped the modern electronic entertainment sector.

With PlayStation 3, it's clear to see how Sony has moulded it. The guiding principle has clearly been to combat the accelerating nature of the entertainment industry, and while this is impossible to do indefinitely, it would seem that Sony has managed to successfully diminish the chances of being bested over the next decade. For the next ten years, PlayStation 3 is future-proof, or at least that's the aim, and the first duty of a future-proof console is to work really well in the now. Right out of the box the PS3 will play your entire DVD collection, it will play your PS2 games and it will play your PSOne games. It will connect to the Internet and store your music and photos. The games on offer in the launch window – the likes of *MotorStorm*, *WarHawk*, *Ridge Racer 7* and *Resistance: Fall Of Man* – will be the yardsticks by which all other games are measured in terms of visuals, sound and gameplay. You will be able to go online to play these games completely free of charge as well, which is not only an incredibly brave move by Sony, but also puts PlayStation 3 at the forefront of the online gaming charge as soon as its released. PlayStation gamers will no longer be second in the online stakes, and consequently neither will Sony.

The most thrilling aspect of the PS3 though, will be its potential. Make no mistake, this will be the best console on the market by some distance come November, but it will only ever get better – that's what makes it future-proof. Initially, the games may not come out on Blu-ray as there might not be the need with regards to expenditure or space, but the console will have a Blu-ray drive. Similarly, there's a good chance that



The Ten

The PS3 games you must play before you, well, die



Heavenly Sword

1 Sony's beautiful fighter is sure to have already inspired many to invest in a PS3. The combat is unlike anything else we've played and makes *God Of War* look like *Lego Star Wars*. Maybe.



MotorStorm

2 The gameplay trailer was so impressive it actually made all the outlandish claims of 2005 seem easily achievable. The textures, the mud, the physics, the buggies... this will be the next great racing series.



Warhawk

3 Aside from being the greatest looking flight simulator of all time, *Warhawk* will also lead the tilt controller revolution for PS3. This is going to be one of the defining games on the system, make no mistake.



Final Fantasy XIII

4 The greatest RPG series ever extends onto PlayStation 3, no doubt enhancing the console's catalogue in much the same way as the series did on PS2. Expect things that go beyond belief.



Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns Of The Patriots

5 This will be one of those games that elevates a console to a whole new level. The real-time trailer is stunning, the game will be even better.



Resistance: Fall Of Man

6 We're confident that the game will remind everyone of its incredible virtues once it arrives. An unfathomably exciting prospect.



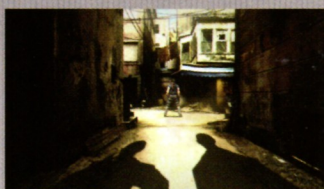
Killzone

7 Does it exist or doesn't it? Well, Guerilla has just finished recruiting for a next-generation title, so what does that tell you? If it's half as good as the trailer made out, then the FPS war will be over.



Tekken

8 Namco's legendary beat-'em-up will have one hell of a legacy to live up to on the next-generation, but with the PlayStation 3 behind it, we can't see this being anything but perfect. And we're pessimists.



Resident Evil 5

9 Another series that's set to reach new heights on PS3. Just the first few shots are enough to know that this is going to be the survival-horror game we've all been waiting for since... *Resi 4*.

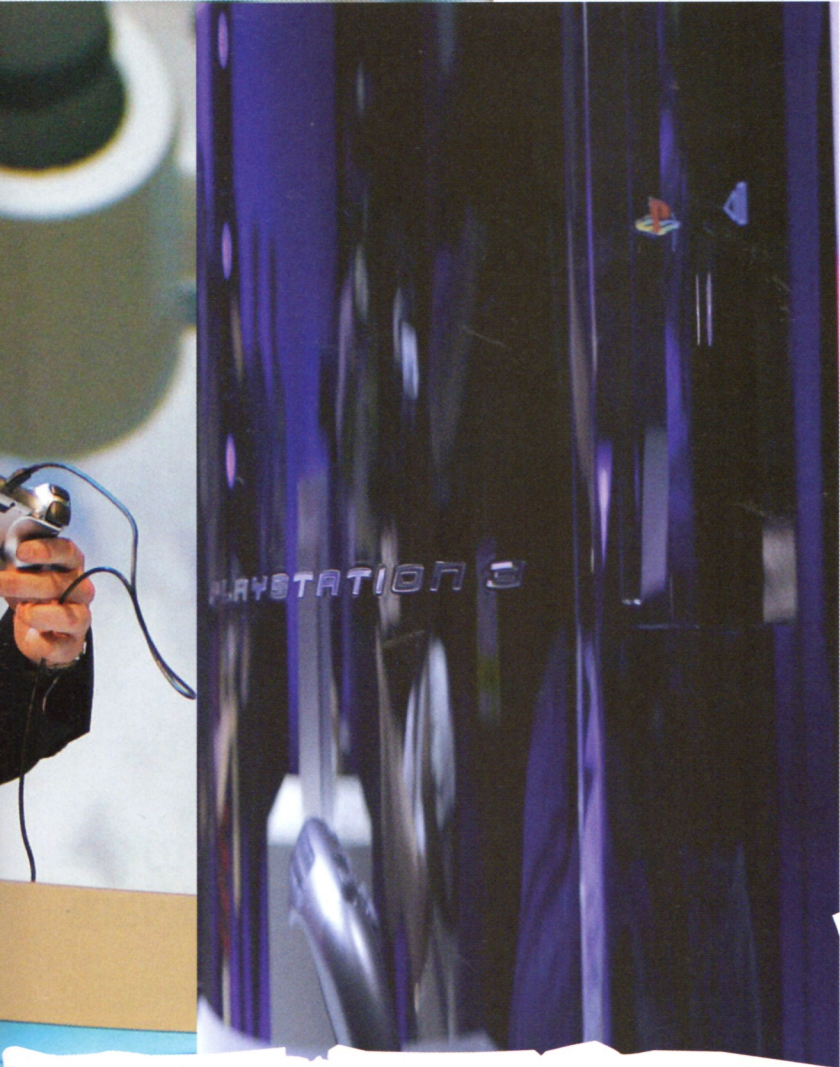


Devil May Cry 4

10 The most stylish hero on the most stylish console. Little is known about the game, but the series has told us all we need to know - *Devil May Cry 4* is going to rock your world.

in Europe there won't be a single high-definition movie for sale until 2007, but the console will have a Blu-ray drive. The point is that the console's ready for the next set of changes, and one of these is going to be the onset of the latest physical format, Blu-ray. Very soon, if not already, gamers are going to demand more than the DVD can offer. There will only be one console on the market for the foreseeable future that offers ten times the space a DVD has per game, and it's not going to be Xbox 360. Or the Wii. And again, this will be the same with BDs. At present, high-definition movies aren't on the shelf, but what DVD did to videotape, BD might well do to DVD. The genius of Sony here is that before the first BD gets shipped in, you will likely already have a BD player in your lounge.

It is generally accepted though that the next physical format will be the last, as e-distribution is probably set to takeover in much the same way that downloading MP3s is now the preferred method of acquiring music. The PlayStation 3, from day one, will be offering downloadable content to its users. Now, while it may be some time before there are downloadable next-generation games on Sony's servers, there will be extra levels, characters, maps and tracks for gamers. It will get gamers into the



"Sony's downloadable content will get gamers into the habit of accessing content, however small, through their PlayStation 3 and, crucially, ready for the next phase of e-distribution"

habit of accessing content, however small, through their PlayStation 3 and, crucially, ready for the next phase of e-distribution.

Some might question why, if it was genuinely serious about embracing the digital distribution of videogames, Sony isn't ready to put content available on its servers from day one, but the technology to make this possible isn't just Sony's responsibility. Broadband bandwidths are increasing all the time, and it won't be long before the national average exceeds 5MB, but at the moment they're not big enough to justify companies like Sony making big files like movies or games available for download. There is a reason why Apple's US Music Store offers so much more video content than the UK version, and it's down to the fact that it's just not a worthwhile option. Yet as we say, bandwidths are increasing all the time, and soon bigger files will be readily available for download. When this happens, you can expect Sony to put its downloadable content where its

mouth is, and those who doubt this should consider one simple fact: PlayStation 3's Ethernet port is capable of accepting 1000MB bandwidth. This, more than anything else, should prove Sony is keen to have the PlayStation 3 on the shelves for some time to come. Two years ago, Ken Kutaragi stated that the plan was to have a console that lasted a decade, and while the figure of ten years was never meant to be precise, it certainly reinforces what the capabilities of the console imply.

Clearly, the majority of the technology behind PlayStation 3 is built to last, with the Blu-ray drive never to be bested on the physical front and the online capabilities of the machine even more suited to the future. However, question marks will be raised over how PlayStation 3 will fare as a videogame console once it gets past the five-year mark. The PSOne, as with any console that preceded it, looked decidedly dated by the time the first shots of PS2 games came about, and that was

PLAYSTATION 3

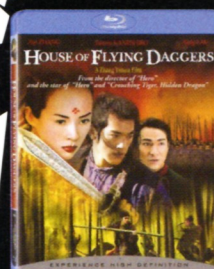


EXPLAINED



Blu-ray Disc

A deeper look at the revolutionary format



Its name

The name Blu-ray is derived from the blue-violet laser the format uses to read and write the disc, as opposed to the red laser a DVD would use. The shorter wavelengths of the blue laser means that more data can be stored onto the same amount of space.

Its size

A single-layer Blu-ray Disc has enough storage space for roughly two hours of high-definition video with audio, amounting to about 25GB. There are also dual-layer Blu-ray Discs available which have double the storage space, 50GB. TDK recently announced its plans to release a 200GB BD.

Its coat

Initially the data stored on the Blu-ray Discs was particularly susceptible to damage due to the data being placed very near the surface of the disc. However, TDK then developed a clear polymer coating for the disc that prevents any such damage, so that's nice.

Its regions

Like DVDs, Blu-ray Discs will be region-encoded. Unlike DVDs, Blu-ray Discs will run by a different system. Region code A will incorporate North America, South America, and East Asia (but not China). Region B will incorporate Europe and Africa. Region C will incorporate everyone else.

Its support

The Blu-ray Disc is supported by the Blu-ray Disc Association which is made up of over 170 members. These include Sony, Sharp, Samsung, TDK, 20th Century Fox, Walt Disney, Apple, Hewlett Packard, Hitachi, LG Electronics, Mitsubishi, Panasonic, Warner Bros. and Paramount.

Its release

After a few slight delays, Blu-ray was officially released in the United States on 25 June. Samsung is the only company to currently have a BD player on the market as Sony's has been delayed until 25 October. Blu-ray Discs currently on sale include xXx, Underworld, The Fifth Element and The Terminator.

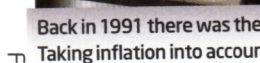
next³ feature

Money, anyone?

PSNext3 considers the price of PlayStation 3 comparatively



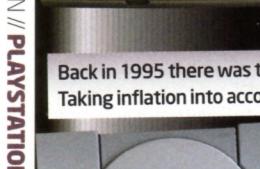
Back in 1990 there was the Neo Geo, which cost... **£500**
Taking inflation into account, today it would cost... **£740**



Back in 1991 there was the SNES, which cost... **£130**
Taking inflation into account, today it would cost... **£185**



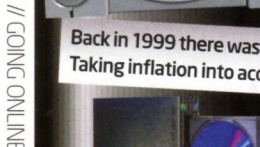
Back in 1993 there was the 3DO, which cost... **£700**
Taking inflation into account, today it would cost... **£920**



Back in 1995 there was the Saturn, which cost... **£400**
Taking inflation into account, today it would cost... **£500**



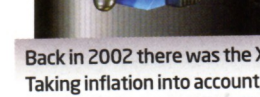
Back in 1995 there was the PSOne, which cost... **£300**
Taking inflation into account, today it would cost... **£375**



Back in 1999 there was the Dreamcast, which cost... **£200**
Taking inflation into account, today it would cost... **£230**



Back in 2000 there was the PlayStation 2, which cost... **£270**
Taking inflation into account, today it would cost... **£300**



Back in 2002 there was the Xbox, which cost... **£300**
Taking inflation into account, today it would cost... **£320**

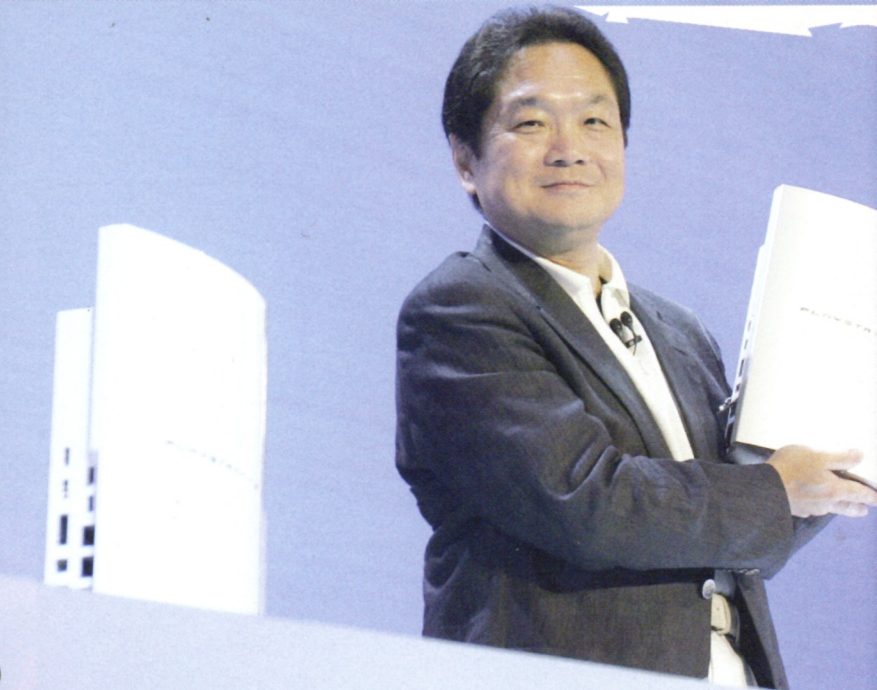


Back in 2005 there was the Xbox 360, which cost... **£280**
Taking inflation into account, today it would cost... **£280**

So...

It's fairly interesting to note that despite being extortionately priced, the 60GB PlayStation 3 is only **the fourth most expensive console of all time**, while the 20GB is the sixth. This is not taking into account the fact that **PS3 is the greatest console of all time** and also the **cheapest Blu-ray player** by quite some distance.

PS3: cheap-ish!



"Sony is planning a ten-year-long reign for its new console, so developers are going to have to go further with one piece of hardware than they ever have before"

after only four or five years. The same thing is starting to happen to PS2, with the current lot of games piling in comparison to the next-generation games. Again, this is happening only five years after the PS2 was the bright young thing, so it's almost inconceivable that after five, six, possibly even ten years after PS3 is released, its catalogue of games will still be the best the industry has to offer.

Well, it's a difficult one to call, but while it will be surprising to see the PS3 at the top of the food chain after a decade, it's not necessarily going to be impossible. Sony's consoles aren't developer friendly, the PSOne and PS2 weren't and the

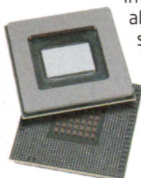
PS3 isn't going to be either. This is a good thing. Look at the difference between, for example, *Burnout 4* and *Ridge Racer V*. The former came towards the end of the PS2's glory days, while the latter was there at the start. The difference on a visual, aural, and gameplay level is huge, and the same goes for *SoulCalibur III* and *Tekken Tag*, or *Killzone* and *Silent Scope*. It takes time for developers to get the best out of PlayStations, and this will be the case with the PlayStation 3. The shots we're seeing now are going to pale in comparison to the ones we start seeing in a few years once the developers have really got to grips with the hardware. *Resistance: Fall Of Man* may look

A brief history of

PLAYSTATIONS

March 2000

Combining forces with IBM and Toshiba, Sony starts to build a new kind of processor - one that when sequenced offers an exponential amount of processing power. Called the Cell chip, the processor is a clear move on Sony's behalf to compete with the Intel Pentium Processor, although rumours start to circulate that it will be the main processor for the next-generation PlayStation.



January 2002

Sony announces that it has been developing a successor to the PlayStation 2 for two years although the electronics company refuses to give the project a name.



19 February 2002

Sony builds another electronics alliance and announces Blu-ray Disc technology. The new disc works in a similar fashion to DVDs, but because of the way the disc is written ie through a blue laser rather than a red one, its storage capacity is potentially much bigger and would be perfect for storing high-definition video. The new format gains instant support from Apple, Disney and many other major corporations.





the business now, but just wait until you see what *Resistance 3* looks like.

Sony, however, is not planning this continual development of PS3 software to last five years as it might have done with PlayStation and PlayStation 2 games. This time the firm is planning a ten-year-long reign for its new console, so developers are going to have to go further with one piece of hardware than they ever have before. Sony's confidence that this won't be a problem speaks volumes about PlayStation 3's immense power and potential.

It is plain to see that the PlayStation 3 is not going to disappoint. The specs are

there for all to witness and the gameplay trailers and technology demos have made it clear that come 17 November the bar is going to be raised very high indeed. It's a good job too, as this is – without a doubt – the most anticipated console of them all. Even those that aren't keen gamers have been desperate to get hold of one since its capabilities were made public; such is the PlayStation 3's mass appeal. Getting to this point of optimism and eagerness has been a long time coming for Sony though, because irrespective of its status now, the PS3 has had a fairly tumultuous beginning.

In part, this is due to the performance of the PlayStation 2. It may be the most

successful console of all time, and it may have introduced the world's most popular entertainment format to many a home, but when it first appeared the PS2 was actually a slight disappointment for many. Its much-touted 'Emotion Engine' and steep price tag had left a good portion feeling let down by Sony. This was amplified by the successes of the Xbox, a clearly more powerful machine and one with a superb online service. This feeling obviously didn't amount to much in the marketplace as the PS2 has dominated that since it first sat on the shelf, but it did breed a more cynical view of Sony. PSOne had been the best machine of its generation, but PlayStation 2 was, in



Bringing you up to date on the next-gen console, from then to... now

November 2002

Almost exactly four years before it is due to be launched, Sony registers the name playstation3.com essentially confirming that the name of the new console is going to be called the PlayStation 3. It also registers playstation4.com and playstation5.com, although no one expects to see them for a while yet.

December 2002

PlayStation 3 releases the first PS3 logo. Oh no, wait, it didn't – it was a mock up by an art student apparently obsessed with circles. The logo is, however, well received and even today people see this as an official design.

10 May 2004

At the end of a mostly software-focused E3, Sony announces that the Cell chip will be demonstrated at next year's E3. Everyone takes this to mean that Sony will be unveiling the PS3 at the event. They were right.



4 August 2004

Sony announces a read-only version of the Blu-ray Disc. It then goes on to state that this format will be used for PlayStation 3 games. All of a sudden Blu-ray is the most important thing of all time. It is already clear that the PS3 is shaping up to be more than just a videogame console.



16 May 2005

The PlayStation 3 is revealed as the highlight of Sony's pre-E3 press conference. Sony shows what the console will look like and also demos an hour of pre-rendered movies showing what PS3 games could look like. The movies are made to spec and the standout clip is from *Killzone*. Many mistakenly think that this is an announcement for a next-gen *Killzone*. Sony say that the console will be released in Spring 2006.

September 2005

The Tokyo Game Show comes along and Konami reveals the first footage of *Metal Gear Solid 4*. Everyone thinks it's the greatest FMV ever... and then Kojima reveals that it's running in real-time... and that the final game will look much better. Other games revealed at the show include *Resident Evil 5* and *Devil May Cry 4*.



What Sony's online experience will offer

Going Online With Your PS3

Sony didn't do a very good job with PlayStation 2's network service. It worked, it just didn't work nearly as well as we would have liked, and, crucially, not half as well as Microsoft's Xbox Live service which offered easy access, a global server, decent online games, an excellent community system... all the things that Sony had seemingly not been bothered to do with the PS2's Network Play. Thankfully, nothing motivates a company more than being beaten at something by a rival, and it looks as though PlayStation 3's online service is going to be as impressive a set-up as anyone's ever seen.

Tellingly, when Sony first announced that "PlayStation 3's Cell chip had been built with broadband in mind from the ground up", many were sceptical. This was no doubt due to similar claims made by Sony's Kaz Hirai right before PlayStation 2 was launched, when the President of Sony America declared that, "We want the PS2 to lead the broadband revolution!". Of course, this turned out to be so far from what actually happened it hurts to think about it, but there was a good explanation for it. Broadband was still in its infancy when PS2 arrived, it was a tool used by those who really knew what they were doing on the web, rather than what it is now, which is something even middle-aged mums can get to grips with. Because of its relative exclusivity, the first few years of broadband were always going to be littered with companies taking risks to exploit it, and it took failures like Network Play and successes like Xbox Live to really establish decent templates. Now broadband is everywhere, companies are selling bandwidth for next to nothing, and the era of downloadable music and online gaming is well and truly upon us. Everything is set for PlayStation 3 to come along and take advantage.

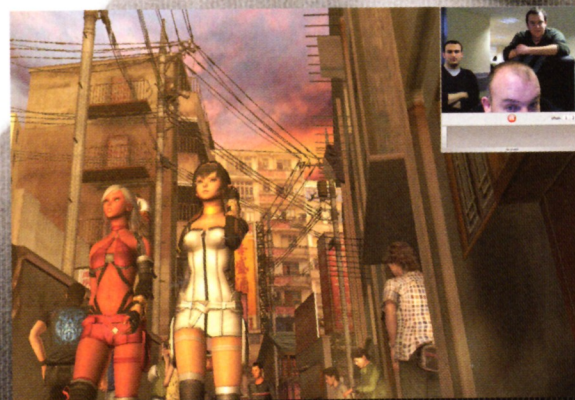
Rather mischievously, Sony recently thanked Microsoft for leading the way with online gaming, but it also went on to outline its determination to be the champion in the sector from here on in. Sony has learnt from its mistakes and is keen to make the online aspect of PlayStation gaming as big and successful as any other. As Hirai recently put it, "The most important thing is to make sure that online is an integral part of the experience. It's not just a 'nice to have' feature."

Online Multi-player

Of all the elements that Sony is advertising the PlayStation 3's online service will have, it's this that PlayStation gamers arguably crave the most. Deprived of a decent online service on PlayStation 2, gamers will be sure to make up for lost time with this. It will work on a global server as well, meaning that you can play against a female in Fiji as easily as you could against a chap from Clapham, and it's part of PlayStation 3's basic service, which means that it's free. The opportunity is there from day one to play online - we suggest you take it.

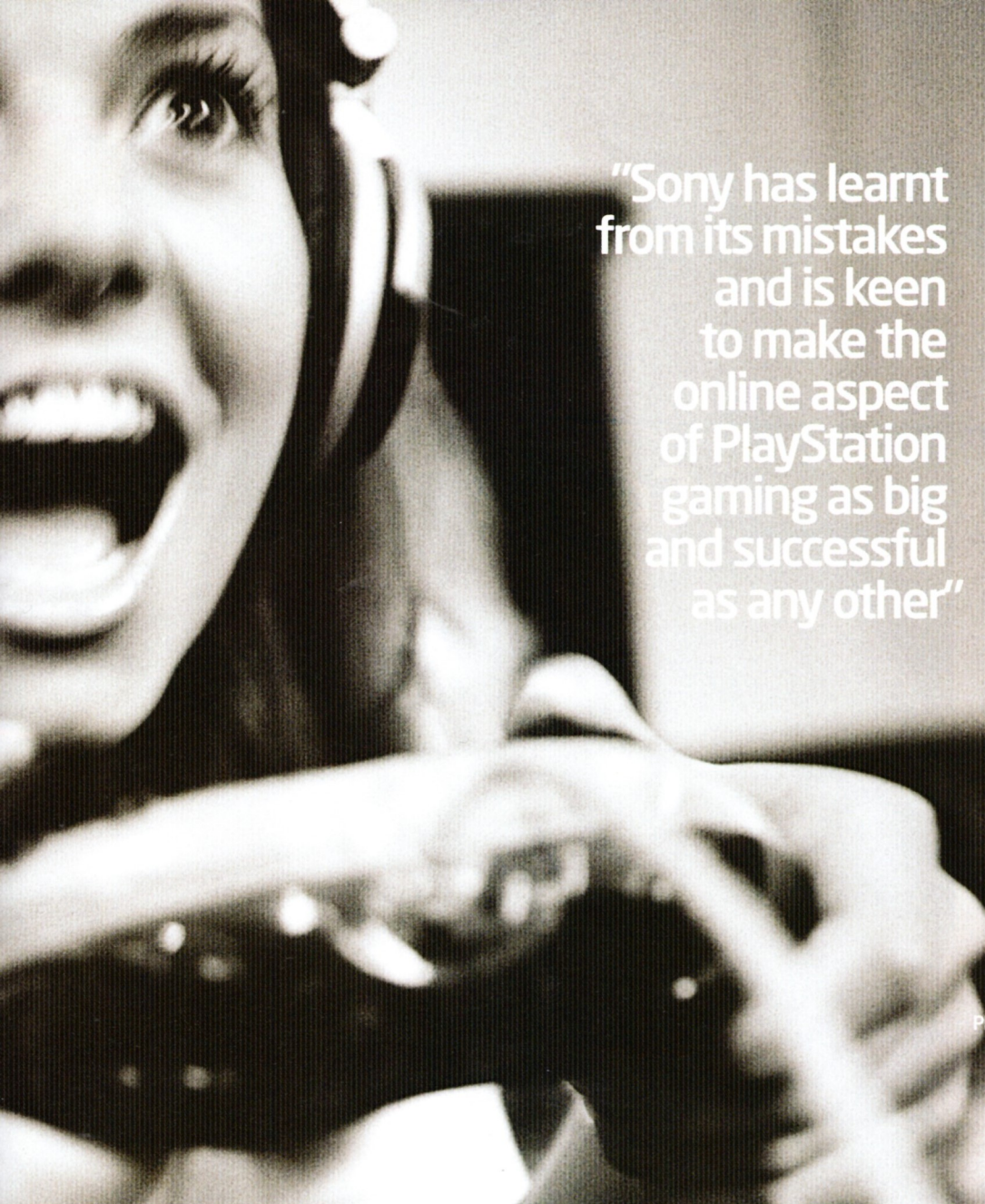
Downloadable Content

This is another of the big draws of Sony's online service. After hearing Phil Harrison and Kaz Hirai talk it would seem that just about every PlayStation 3 game will be utilising this function. Anything from new racing tracks to new cars, from new weapons to new beat-'em-up characters will be available to download. Games will be constantly enriched with new and improved content. The prospect of getting bored by a game because there isn't enough to do is getting smaller and smaller by the second.

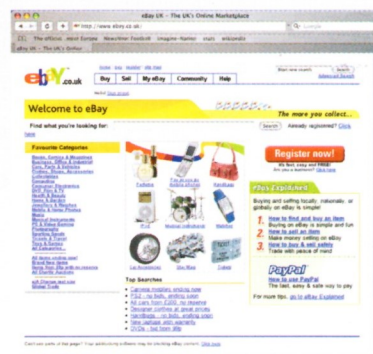


Video Chat

It's all about achieving that sense of community, and nothing will do more for that than watching the facial expressions of a gamer about to lose his seventeenth game of *Tekken 6* in a row, or the hint of arrogance in your Vietnamese friend's eyes as he gets ready to kill you with a headshot from 400 yards. And while here is no doubt that this will enhance the online experience, it's also worth mentioning just how great an element it will be for yapping away with people on your Friend's List. It's as though we're in the future.



"Sony has learnt from its mistakes and is keen to make the online aspect of PlayStation gaming as big and successful as any other"



Auctions

Sony has hinted that it will use the online service to host its own sanctioned auctions. This, again, will do wonders for building up a sense of community within the service, and no doubt Sony will be keen to use eBay's successful model as a template with buyers and sellers receiving ratings based on their reliability. There is little chance that this would ever rival eBay in the web auctions stakes, but it should prove to be fun element regardless.

Download Games

From very early on in PlayStation 3's lifespan you will be able to purchase downloadable content such as levels and characters, but sooner or later there will come a time when you will be able to download whole games to your HDD. Ken Kutaragi has already stated that Blu-ray will be the last physical format a PlayStation uses, and fully expects digital distribution of games to come alive on the next-gen console.



You

Because of the nature of the set up, you will only ever need to create one identity for PlayStation 3 online gaming. This will come as great news to those who have battled on with the PS2's network service, having to go through a rubbish registration process with each and every game you decide to take online. The server will also remember who you are with regards to different games as well, meaning that those you've been a considerable annoyance to in the past on, say, *Burnout 5*, will most likely be aching for you to get back online so they can exact their revenge.

Surf

PlayStation 3 will grant the gamer access to the open Internet. What this means, quite simply, is that everything the worldwide web has to offer can be viewed or downloaded from and to your PlayStation 3. Movies and music can be downloaded straight to your HDD as it could on a PC, the process made much easier by the planned keyboard peripheral.



Uploadable Content

Create a fighter, a racing track, an FPS map, a weapon, or an RPG character and share it with the world. With PlayStation 3's online service you will be able to upload your creations onto a server for others to download. If nothing else this is going to be a great way to boost the depth of your games with a theoretically limitless set of possibilities for every create-your-own element. It will also help build that sense of community so important in making an online service a success.



How Sony plans to have PlayStation 3 interact with its portable console

PSPS3



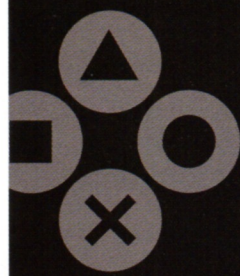
PlayStation 3 may have a release date of the 17 November 2006, but its first major component was actually released a while back. PlayStation

Portable has been designed with Sony's next-gen console in mind and vice versa. Each will enhance the other and bring a totally unique experience to the gamer. Indeed, it's not until you fully understand how the two consoles work together that you start to see what Sony's vision for home entertainment really is. This is not some gimmick dreamed up by Sony to help it sell more units of each console, this is a very real and stunning development in the world of electronics.

Interactivity and connectivity are the guiding principles behind the technology here, with Sony keen to not just properly enter the age of digital distribution, but to grab the era by the scruff of its neck and yank it toward a practical, sensible and logical vision of the future. In a sense, what Sony plans to do with PSP and PS3 in terms of connectivity is just a progression from what Apple did with its iPod and iTunes, synchronising two products so perfectly it becomes a wonder how one existed without the other.

By enabling the free transfer of data between the two machines, and by developing a system so that it can happen across continents ie wirelessly, Sony is essentially tying you to your living room. With a PlayStation 3 at home and a PSP in your pocket, you will have constant access to a barrage of media, only ever one download away from watching that film you have at home or listening to that album you forgot to bring with you, or even playing that PSOne game you have stored on your PS3's hard disk. It's strange to think that the term 'PlayStation' has become prophetic, but that's certainly what's happened. The console will, in part, become a service area for you to upload to and download from, an entertainment headquarters that broadcasts you what ever it is you're after.

It could be argued that Blu-ray won't truly launch until PlayStation 3 does, and for the same reason, neither will LocationFree technology. Sony already has for sale the Powerful Network Platforms required to make this dream portable entertainment situation happen, but it is with PlayStation 3 that the company is really looking to launch the service. Come November, the constant digital transactions that Sony wants between its machines will become a regular occurrence, and we can't bloody wait.



Connected

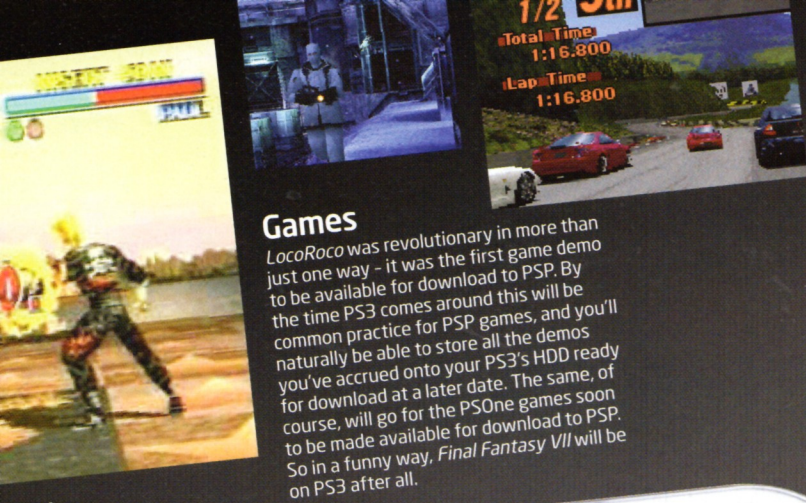
The content you will be able to transfer between



Music

Your music collection has got out of control and you've far too many albums to put on your PSP for that long journey to South Africa you're about to make. Not a problem. Before you leave, upload your Muse, Radiohead, Basement Jaxx or whatever it is you crazy kids listen to these days onto your PlayStation 3's massive HDD, and download the tracks you want as soon as you hit a Wi-Fi spot. Once you've finished, rid your Memory Stick Duo of the tracks and download a load more. See, it's a neverending circle of technology, music and world travel.





Games

LocoRoco was revolutionary in more than just one way - it was the first game demo to be available for download to PSP. By the time PS3 comes around this will be common practice for PSP games, and you'll naturally be able to store all the demos you've accrued onto your PS3's HDD ready for download at a later date. The same, of course, will go for the PSOne games soon to be made available for download to PSP. So in a funny way, *Final Fantasy VII* will be on PS3 after all.

consoles



WiFi
HOTSPOT

The PSP, now enabled with the code, can act as a remote control for the PS3. It's just like on Cribbs.

Data is transferred between the consoles via Wi-Fi.

Data is transferred between the consoles via the Memory Stick Duo.

Movies

Sony's Connect website is soon to undergo a big revamp in an attempt to compete with the might of iTunes. Once the revamp is over, expect Sony to have its own movies up for download to PS3 or PSP. In the meantime, you will be able to download movies from the Internet, through sites such as CinemaNow, to your PS3's HDD and have them ready to upload onto your PS3. Also, MPEG4s you have recorded onto your PSP can then be uploaded to your PS3's HDD for you to download at a later date. Just imagine being thousands of miles from home and still having instant access to your *Spider-Man* movies or episodes of *Lost* you've yet to watch. Magic.

It's not surprising if *Spider-Man 2* heads Sony's movie downloads.

Shows like *Lost* have already proved hugely popular on iTunes Music Store.

Photos

So you're chatting with some business men you've had to meet in Hanoi, and you get talking about your girlfriend/daughter/pet fish and decide to show them a photo. You haven't got one on you so you waltz over to the nearby Wi-Fi spot and download a selection. It seems too simple to be true, but this is the way things will work in the not-too-distant future.



PLAYSTATION 3

PS3 Jargon

PS3 JARGON # 1

6,000,000

- ✗ There will be this many PlayStation 3's shipped by the time March comes around. A lot, but nowhere near enough.

PS3 JARGON # 2

PS3 = Food

- ✗ Ken Kutaragi had this to say about PS3's comparatively large price tag: "It's nonsense to compare the charge for dinner at a cafeteria with dinner at a fine restaurant."

PS3 JARGON # 3

No Flop

- ✗ The computers used to render *Spider-Man 3* ran at 10 Terraflops - PlayStation 3 runs at two Terraflops. Staggering.

PS3 JARGON # 4

Old New Controller

- ✗ Phil Harrison reckons that the PS3's motion-sensing controller has been thought about since 1994. Believe.

PS3 JARGON # 5

RSXy

- ✗ Instead of using polygons, PS3's RSX graphics chip uses pixel shading. Mmmm.

PS3 JARGON # 6

We Like P

- ✗ While most PS3 games will be running at 720p to start off with, by next year the majority will be running in 1080p. Or at least that's the aim.

PS3 JARGON # 7

PS3: The Parent

- ✗ Kutaragi reckons that: "PS3 will instill discipline in our children and adults alike. Everyone will know discipline." That Cell chip really is something.

PS3 JARGON # 8

Go To Cell

- ✗ The Cell chip can carry out five times more instructions than the world-beating Intel processor. Ha!

PS3 JARGON # 9

Astronomy And Ken

- ✗ "Microsoft shoots for the moon. Sony shoots for the sun."

PS3 JARGON # 10

2 x 2 = 3

- ✗ Sony is aiming for PlayStation 3 to out-sell PS2 by 100 million. That's twice as many as the best selling console managed to shift. Wowzers.

"There have always been big plans for the Cell – the most important of which is to compete with the dominance that the Intel Pentium Processor has over the electronics industry"



some respects, not as good as it could have been. This embittered perception of Sony has stopped many from accepting that the PlayStation 3 will really be as good as the company claims it will, and many cynics have been sure to meet every new announcement with naïve shrugs and narrow-minded boos.

The very core of the console was, in some respects, a massive risk as well. Together with IBM and Toshiba, Sony invested a huge amount of money into creating the Cell chip, the revolutionary processor that sits smack, bang in the centre of everything the PS3 does. Too

expensive a product to ultimately end up sitting in one 'videogame console', there have always been big plans for the Cell – the most important of which is to compete with the dominance that the Intel Pentium Processor has over the electronics industry. It was and is a huge undertaking by the three technology giants, but because it was rumoured to be the heart of the next-generation PlayStation, many groaned and saw it as nothing more than another attempt by Sony to talk up its technology rather than deliver some. Ambivalence is not what you want when you're investing hundreds of

millions of pounds into a project, but that's exactly what Sony got.

Anticipation really took an upturn, however, when the fakes started showing up. The circle-based logo was the first to really grab the headlines, and the Internet was set alight with cries of 'fake!' and 'lies!'. What it did succeed in doing though, was to make PlayStation 3 seem more like a reality. Up until that point, there had only been thin speculation and Sony's announcement that it was in fact making a next-generation console. Forums dealt with the issue for weeks, magazines splashed it over their covers – the immense buzz really

A brief history of

PLAYSTATION 3

Bringing you up to date on the next-gen con

November 2005

Business analysts and videogame critics begin to think that a release date of Spring 2005 is a tad unrealistic. Sony reacts by reaffirming the target date (although it's getting less clear on its definition of 'spring').

6 January 2006

The Consumer Electronics Show is a massive disappointment. Everyone had expected Sony to release new information and shots on PS3, but instead the company re-runs its E3 footage. Everyone is now 100 per cent certain that the spring deadline won't be met, although Sony still doesn't announce otherwise.

27 February 2006

Retailers from around the globe meet to discuss price points for the next-gen console. The meeting is called Destination: PlayStation.

15 March 2006

Sony makes a series of huge PlayStation 3 announcements at the PlayStation Business Brief 2006. It reveals details about the online service, the hard disk and crucially the release date, which is now confirmed as being November. It also announces – to some surprise – that the release date is an international one.

22 March 2006

At the Game Developers Conference Phil Harrison confirms details announced the week before and then shows real-time demos of *MotorStorm*, *WarHawk* and *Ratchet & Clank*. He also reveals that PlayStation 3 will be region-free and that it will be playable at E3. He finishes by stating that the infamous 'banana-rang' controller will be replaced by another model.

23 March 2006

Very early hands-on reports of PlayStation 3 start to leak. The word is positive although the console doesn't look like being the revolution everyone thought it might be back in May 2005.



Big questions,
easy answersPS3
FAQ**Will my PlayStation 3 play my old PS2 and PSOne games?**

Yes. Mostly. PlayStation 3 is designed to be backwards compatible. It has PS2 hardware built inside it to make this possible, as emulation software is notoriously poor. We say mostly, because there is a chance that some games won't work, although we're in the realms of fractions of a percentage here.

Will I be able to watch all my movies and play my games in high-definition now?

Well, you will be able to if you have an HDTV. PS3 can output at a staggering 1080p, but this won't mean diddly squat unless you have a top-of-the-range TV. Without one, the visuals will still look very good, but nowhere near as good as they could. At the moment, you can pick up a fairly decent HDTV for just under £500, although prices can go up to £4,000 for some.

What's the difference between the 20GB version and the 60GB version?

In terms of videogames, not much at all. They both come with the necessary HDD, they both have a Giga-bit Ethernet connection and they both play Blu-ray Discs and output at 1080p. The 60GB version is much more multimedia friendly, as it comes with slots for Memory Stick Duo, Compact Flash and SD cards as well as Wi-Fi connectivity. It also has an HDMI out which will ensure the best picture and sound quality currently available. In truth, the 60GB version is much more in line with Sony's vision of homogenised entertainment.

What does 'region-free' mean?

It means that PlayStation 3 will be able to play games from across the

world as there won't be any region-encoding on the discs preventing, for instance, a European game playing on a Japanese console. However, with laws on the actual importing of software becoming more stringent, this could turn out to be an empty bonus. Also the region-free element won't apply to movies as it does games.

What will the launch titles be?

Well, according to reports there could be anywhere between ten to 20 launch games, but only a few of these have been officially confirmed, those being *NBA Live 07*, *Stranglehold* and *Sonic The Hedgehog*. Expect much more info - and a considerably better line-up - nearer November.

How much is PlayStation 3 going to cost?

It will be £340 for the 20GB and £425 for the 60GB. However, in order to fully experience the console you will need to purchase an HDTV (£500-£1500), an HDMI cable (£80) and of course a game (£50).

How much is online gaming going to cost me?

Sod all. The online service comes free with the console. You will have to pay for downloadable content, but online multi-player will cost you zilch.

Is there really going to be an improved PS3 in the next couple of years?

Probably not. Ken Kutaragi recently stated that there could be improvements in the same way that a PC might receive them, but we wouldn't take this as gospel. Expect nothing more than bigger HDD additions and excellent peripherals.

demonstrated the hold that the PlayStation brand had over the entertainment market, and more importantly whetted the appetite for something astonishing.

It was not long after this that designs for the PS3 itself started pouring in, but none were accompanied by an official Sony statement, so all were considered fake, which of course they were. However, as with the logo, the images were rigorously debated over and in some cases used as evidence for what the real PlayStation 3 might be like - an utterly preposterous notion, but such was the feverish hunger for real information on the hardware. What

m then to... now



PLAYSTATION
next3

7 April 2006

President of Sony France George Fornay implies that the console will cost between €499 and €599. The estimate confirms what many had thought all along.

8 May 2006

Sony's pre-E3 conference comes packed with news. PS3 will come in two versions, one with a 20GB HDD, one with a 60GB HDD. The former will cost £340 while the latter will cost £410. The console is to be released 11 November in Japan and 17 November everywhere else.

**13 May 2006**

President of Sony America Kaz Hirai announces that there will most likely be 15 videogame titles available for launch day.

**26 May 2006**

Sony software platform manager Izumi Kawanishi declares that generic devices, such as a TV tuner, can be attached to PS3, meaning that the console could also act as a digital video recorder.

16 June 2006

Ken Kutaragi reveals plans for HDD upgrades, the cooling system and discusses plans for potential shortages.

**25 June 2006**

The first Blu-ray players and discs go on sale in the US. The sales are slow to start, but the verdict is positive.

28 June 2006

Sony launches the PlayStation 3 website.



Be the envy of your mates!

Build Your Own PS3!

Fool your friends into thinking you've got an early (paper) prototype!*

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Cut around the template. Note: scissors are dangerous and should not be used as a throwing tool.
- 2 Place the template over the back of an old cereal box and cut around the edge again.
- 3 Now glue the template to the card.
- 4 Now fold the net so that edge **A** touches edge **B**.
- 5 Sellotape the edges together.
- 6 Now fold in flap **C** so that it meets with edge **D**.
- 7 Sellotape the edges together.
- 8 Do the same for flaps **E** and **F** with edges **G** and **H**. Now tape a cardboard bottom to your model.
- 9 Cut off the wire to your DualShock2 and pretend it's a snazzy wireless PS3 controller.**
- 10 Throw it in the bin.

*Warning: Might not actually work.

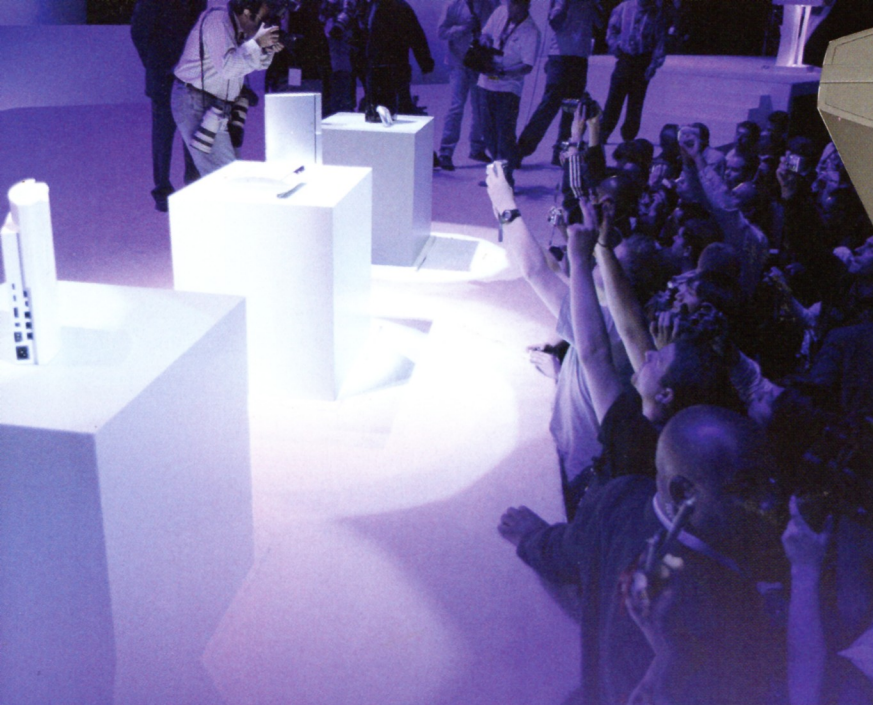
** We don't seriously suggest you do this, we just thought it'd be funny.

was most incredible though, was that, remarkably, Sony's hold over the industry was so strong that publicity came from the consumer

itself – a marketing tack corporations could have only ever dreamed about. All of a sudden, and seemingly from nowhere, the PlayStation 3 was on everyone's minds.

Then the focus shifted. Sony announced that the machine will incorporate Blu-ray technology, and it instantly attracted a new batch of enthusiasts and cynics. Clearly, this was good news in terms of the PlayStation 3 itself – it will be running on a format that's far superior to the hugely successful DVD – but surely it would be bad for the consumer, asking it to once

Remember. Be careful when using sharp tools such as scissors



"That Sony waited until spring to announce that the console would be delayed only gave more ammunition to those claiming that the videogames giant had become too arrogant to succeed again"

again spend a vast amount of money on revamping its media. Many also saw it as Sony – still keen to make up for the failure of Beta Max – taking advantage of its best selling console to force the consumer to decide between Blu-ray and the other next-generation disc, HD DVD. Rival companies, particularly Microsoft, picked up on this point as a way of deterring people away from the PlayStation 3, and many do seem to have jumped on the bandwagon and pointed a condemning finger at Sony. However, as the HD era begins in earnest, it's clear that the PS3's Blu-ray drive has become a real attractive quality, especially given the astronomical prices of the other next-gen disc players, and with many looking to build their home cinema system around the console. Regardless of its obvious benefits though, the Blu-ray drive has had its drawbacks for Sony in terms of the PS3's publicity, and was cited as being the chief reason for the console's delay.

The spring deadline initially set by Sony for Japanese consumers was scoffed at from the off. Sure, many still had faith in Sony's ability to keep its promise and do the seemingly impossible, but a huge majority saw it as an insurmountable target in much the same way that a fully functioning Emotion Engine was. Indeed, the general consensus was that Sony was again lying to its consumers. At some points, Sony's refusal to accept what was becoming abundantly clear

felt patronising. The fact that Sony waited until spring to announce that the console would be delayed only gave more ammunition to those claiming that the videogames giant had become too arrogant to succeed again. If there was to be a low point in the PlayStation 3's lifespan, this may well have been it.

PlayStation 3 has been the main attraction for two E3s running now, and on both occasions it stood head and shoulders above everything else at the show. However, the success wasn't as clear-cut as that, with the demonstrations increasing scepticism about just what Sony's latest box of tricks could do. In the first instance – 2005 – this was because Sony showed 'gameplay footage' that looked too good. In the second instance – 2006 – it was when the company showed gameplay footage that certainly wasn't anything like it'd shown the year before. Reality was catching up with PlayStation 3 and the cynics were loving every minute of it, happy to point out how Sony might have – again – misled the consumer into thinking it was going to get something unimaginably brilliant when in fact it was getting something merely extraordinary. Ultimately though, the critics could only ever say that the PlayStation 3 wasn't as good as something that didn't exist, and that was irrelevant. What was clear after E3, and particularly the most recent one, was that the PlayStation 3 was the



Pre-Orders *An update*

What the major retailers are currently doing to make getting a PS3 that much easier

amazon.co.uk

The console is listed on the site, but there is yet to be any pre-order system put in place. You can register for an alert that lets you know when PlayStation 3 is available to order, but nothing more. The site is also only listing the 60GB version.

play.com

The console has been listed for pre-order for over a month now. It is currently only available as part of a £549.99 value pack, which includes the games *WarHawk*, *Formula One* and *SingStar*, none of which have yet been announced as launch titles. Incidentally, the site also lists *Metal Gear Solid 4* as available for launch.

GAME

The console is listed on the store's website, but there is yet to be any pre-order system put in place. You can register for an alert that lets you know when PS3 is available to order, but that's it. The store is also only listing the 60GB version. The GAME marketing department were quoted as saying: "In regards to pre-ordering the PS3 we don't have any information at this at the moment - we are waiting to hear more from Sony and therefore aren't in a position to

provide any information to customers."

GameStation

Immediately after E3 the store listed the 60GB version up for pre-order but subsequently ended the system when it became clear that no number of units could be guaranteed to consumers anywhere in the world. It has now adopted a queuing system for the console and also lists the 20GB version on its website.

Virgin Megastore

The store has yet to list the console on its website. A spokesperson for its marketing department had this to say: "At the moment, we don't have any plans for PlayStation 3 pre-orders as we don't have any idea regarding volumes. We're waiting to hear more from Sony."

Tesco

The supermarket chain has yet to list the console on its site, and consequently no pre-order system is in place.

HMV

The store has yet to list the console on its website.

WH Smith

The store has yet to list the console on its website.

most impressive piece of entertainment hardware the world had ever seen.

Perhaps PlayStation 3's biggest opponent though hasn't been the cynics but rather the consumer's general concern over the console's price tag. Ever since Sony made its intentions clear, ie to create the complete home entertainment system, the price has come into question. The estimates have ranged from the absurd (£1,000) to the ridiculously hopeful (£150), and at times it seemed as though Sony was teasing the consumer by only ever hinting at a price range. The confirmation of its price came a few weeks before the most recent E3, and though it was certainly a realistic and by no means unusually high figure for a console, it was met with some disappointment.

These things, however, have to be looked at in perspective, and by anyone's standards the PS3 is a bargain. Considering that the console will act as a Blu-ray player, a DVD player, a PS2, a PSOne, a videophone, a media storage system, an internet browser and a next-gen console, £425 isn't really too much to pay. And neither is £340 for that matter. The expense isn't solely on the consumer either, as the PlayStation 3 represents a massive expenditure for Sony. Business analysts Merrill Lynch calculate that the PS3 could set Sony back as much as £573 million by the end of its first year of

sales. Now, while it's typical for a console to lose money for its producer (the money is made back in software sales), this sum will be an unprecedented loss, meaning that the console will be worth much more than what the consumer pays for it. Each PS3 will reportedly cost just under £500 for the company to build, £158 of which is spent on the Cell chip, RSX chip and the Blu-ray drive. On top of this the developer has to consider the £17 million it spent on developing the RSX chip, the huge marketing costs and the massive £232 million the company has spent on the Cell processor.

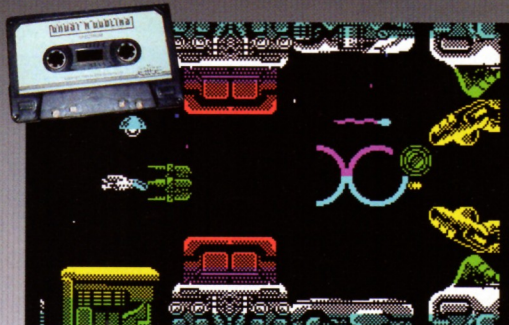
These, even for a company the size of Sony, are astronomical figures, but if nothing else it shows the faith the company has in the console. Compare this with the minimal risk and expenditure Nintendo has taken with the Wii, and you'll have a better understanding of what Sony is attempting with the PS3. The Wii will essentially be a GameCube in a new box, with all the development time and money gone into the controller. This is not an attack on Nintendo, but the gamble the videogame company is taking is minute when compared with Sony's, and to our minds the size of the gamble is an accurate reflection of the confidence. Sony is putting its future at risk for one product, and no company does that unless it is absolutely positive that its product is going to rock the known world. If nothing else, the

PLAYSTATION

The Evolution Of Games

How improving data storage has changed the industry over the years

FORMAT:	Tape
SYSTEM:	Spectrum, C64
GAME:	R-Type
DATA CAPACITY:	128K



FORMAT:	Disk
SYSTEM:	Amstrad 6128, Amiga
GAME:	Speedball 2
DATA CAPACITY:	1.4MB



FORMAT:	Cartridge
SYSTEM:	SNES, N64
GAME:	Super Mario Kart, GoldenEye
DATA CAPACITY:	2-32MB, 128-512MB





"We believe that the PS3 will be the place where our users play games, watch films, browse the web, and use other computer functions. PlayStation 3 is a computer. We do not need the PC"

Phil Harrison, Sony Computer Entertainment

PlayStation 3 will become an apt symbol for Sony's incredible ambition.

Sony is clearly keen to have the

PlayStation 3 compound its presence in the digital era, but it will by no means be the company's singular outstanding effort in the field. The Sony Bravia is fast becoming the must-own HDTV series, with the high-end version coming with a screen resolution of 1080p, something that Phil Harrison defines as 'true HD'. The revived Walkman brand is making a serious attempt, however futile, at dethroning the iPod as the most popular MP3 player, and Sony is also planning to have at least one other Blu-ray player on the shelves by the end of the year. Perhaps the truest mark of Sony's ambitions in the field so far though is the PSP, the portable console that broke all records in Europe when it was released last year. The

multimedia delight's achievements have been nothing short of incredible, warming the Sony consumer to the digital era in a way that no other mass-appealing device could. One of the more exciting aspects of the mobile console, however, and another sign of the extent of Sony's vision, is the fact that it's technically a component of the PlayStation 3.

Although the PSP was released much sooner than the PS3, it was clearly designed – conceptually at least – in tandem with the next-gen console. The Wi-Fi connectivity, the Memory Stick Duo compatibility, the ability to play and store MP3s, MPEG4s, JPEGs and the like, even down to the cross media bar, are elements which the two consoles share. Indeed, at the PlayStation Business Brief 2006, the PS3's 60GB hard disk was described as being able to act as a 'Home Server' as well as being a 'Powerful Network Platform',

which essentially means that it will be able to supply your PSP with any file it has stored on it, and providing there's suitable network access, would be able to do this from anywhere in the world.

Sony has also laid the foundations for more direct interaction between the consoles. Already it's been confirmed that the PSP can act as a rear-view mirror for the upcoming *Formula One* title, and you can expect many more similar innovations when the next-gen console hits its stride at the start of 2007. Perhaps more telling is the plans to make the PSP a remote control for the PlayStation 3. When PS3 becomes available, you will be able to download a code to your Memory Stick Duo that transforms it into a luxury channel changer. It's a slight but remarkable idea that perfectly illustrates both the ingenuity of Sony and the fact that the first piece of your PS3 is already on the shelves.

The evolution of videogames has been marked by an exponential growth in data storage – from the humble C90 cassettes of the Eighties to the inclusion of Blu-ray on PS3, the size of the storage medium affects just how good developers can make their games. Here's how it all pans out...

FORMAT: CD-ROM
SYSTEM: Saturn, PlayStation
GAME: Final Fantasy VII, Metal Gear Solid
DATA CAPACITY: 700MB



FORMAT: DVD-ROM
SYSTEM: PlayStation 2, Xbox, Xbox 360
GAME: GTA: San Andreas, Ghost Recon
DATA CAPACITY: 4.5GB, 9GB



FORMAT: Blu-ray
SYSTEM: PlayStation 3
GAME: Assassin's Creed, Metal Gear Solid 4
DATA CAPACITY: 25GB-50GB



At the very least PS3 is going

to be the best videogame console on the market, but it will be so much more than that. Ignoring the more obvious mainstream qualities for a moment as well, the PS3's potential to affect both everyday life and what we consider entertainment is astounding. Sony's dream is to have PlayStation interfere with every aspect of your life, and this is something that's becoming more feasible with the notion that you may well be able to speak to your friends through video chat. The online capabilities of the machine, combined with the EyeToy's magic, will mean that videophones will explode into the mainstream. The science of it is really quite simple: if the PlayStation 3 sells anywhere near as well as the PlayStation 2 did – and it is expected to sell much better – then the console will become a viable way of communicating with others.

The PlayStation 3 will also open up a whole new form of entertainment in what could only be described as a cross between podcasting and early cable TV. Utilising Sony's central server, the PS3 will enable anyone who wants to record and upload their own moving pictures.

Using a high-definition Internet Protocol camera, you will be able to record your own television show – be it a cookery class or a fight – and send it out into the big wide world for all to see. The scope for this is massive, and though it will inevitably lead to some serious junk, it really demonstrates the potential for fun that exists within the tremendous technology. The mere fact that one moment you could be playing *Tekken 6* online and then in the next instance uploading a 'How To Bake The Perfect Cheesecake' movie onto a global server demonstrates, more than any spec sheet could, the sublime capabilities of the PlayStation 3.

There is, of course, the subject of the games themselves, and while the

immediate concern here is the hardware, it would be foolish to ignore what will inevitably define the console as much as any spec or soundbite. On launch day there is no doubt going to be more mouthing off from those who have said all along that PlayStation 3 is in fact no different from its rivals. This will happen because come 17 November the games available for PS3 are, by and large, going to be available on other consoles as well. Even the games that are exclusive to Sony won't be particularly groundbreaking either. Games like *Resistance: Fall Of Man*, *WarHawk* and *Everybody's Golf* probably won't stand out massively from similar games on other formats, and while some may desperately want to deny this, it's something they're going to have to accept. There are obvious positives to the supposed launch line up – the fact that there's going to be 15 titles available immediately and that they will all be second to none in terms of quality – but we're sure it will be the negatives that grab the headlines. Sony's hype machine is going to try to turn the tide, but in all likelihood folk will have a knee jerk reaction to the price and to the fact that the games aren't offering anything new.

But PlayStation 3 hasn't been designed to break sales records in its first weekend – there wouldn't be enough of them available to do that anyway. PS3 is designed for the future, both near and far, so while the launch games may not wow as much as staunch supporters of the brand might like them to, the games released in 2007 and 2008 are going to blow the competition out of the water. Indeed, it won't be long before the console has been blessed with next-generation versions of some of the greatest videogame series of all time – *Devil May*

Cry 4, *Metal Gear Solid 4*, *Final Fantasy XIII*, *Resident Evil 5*, *Tekken 6*, *Grand Theft Auto IV*, *Virtua Fighter 5*... games sure to raise the profile of PlayStation 3 immeasurably.

Let's not forget that the console will also play host to many new series of games looking to make a name for themselves in this new generation. Games like *Assassin's Creed* and *Heavenly Sword* will arguably be as important in defining the console as the pinnacle of videogame entertainment as the established lot. There will be a rush to judge PlayStation 3 on its performance before the fat man comes down the chimney, but we'd urge you to wait a bit longer. It's going to be worth it.

After all the talk, the hype, the arguments, the misdirection and the myths, it seems odd to think that soon we will all be confronted with the reality of PS3. Before the year is up, thousands of Brits will have made that fateful dash to the game store and come back out with a PS3 sitting snugly in a carrier bag. It will be a strange day for them, as they would probably have had to buy the console before they went to work, so all day long they will be pretending to work at their desk with the console tight next to their feet. At lunch they may rush out to buy an HDMI cable and finally decide on a game, possibly even a Blu-ray movie (if indeed they are even in Europe by then). The wallet will sting a bit, but that's been taken into consideration since spring. Then will come the long stare at the clock, watching each minute drag by before hurrying to the bus

"Sony's dream is to have PlayStation interfere with every aspect of your life - a notion that's becoming more and more likely"



stop. On the bus the carrier bag is covered just in case anyone spots what it is that they have in there and decides it's worth robbing them for. The chances of this happening are probably so enormous it's not really worth worrying about, but they do anyway. Then it's through the door, into the lounge, bag down and off to the toilet (because they're excited and because they don't want nature to get in the way of what's about to happen).

The opening of the box is the most precious of moments: slow, easy and careful. It's the same with the wires and cables, all neatly placed in so as to be sure to avoid any problems. Before the television is turned on, the box is put away and the excess rubbish is dumped. This moment has to be perfect, because it's going to last about eight hours, or however long it takes for the pain in the eyes to become too much. The quick scan through the cross media bar feels as smooth as they had dreamed it would be, while the first tap to commence gaming is as joyful as they'd wanted. This is the precise second when the rumours, the naysaying, the talking-up and the marketing campaigns become extraneous. This is when the PlayStation 3 starts doing what it was meant to do all along: entertain you.

The Ultimate PS3 Shopping List

Shopping for next-gen gaming, sir? Then you'll need this handy cut-out-and-keep shopping list, which comes in three useful categories

ON A BUDGET

PS3

PlayStation 3 £340

If you want to have next-gen gaming and save a bit of cash then you'll really have to go for the slimmed down version of the PlayStation 3.

TV

Samsung Z4 Series £450

This 32-inch CRT TV is just about as cost-effective as HDTVs get. Deeper and heavier than its LCD cousins, it has a massive upside: it'll give you next-gen HD visuals at a fraction of the cost.

SURROUND SOUND

Sony STRDG500 AV Receiver £170



Sony SAVE155 Home Cinema Speaker System £100

You might as well match the collars and cuffs when buying a budget surround sound system. And you can't really go wrong with Sony. Offers very good sound for the price and it'll match your PS3. Woot!



BROADBAND

AOL Wireless Broadband £14.99 per month



A 1MB connection is just about the minimum required for online gaming and this deal comes with 'free' wireless router which means you'll be able to take advantage of PS3's wireless capabilities.

GAME

Call Of Duty 3 £50

Buying just one game at launch? Then you can't really go wrong with a WWII first-person shooter with online gaming to whet your whistle.

TOTAL £1,125

THE MIDDLE WAY

PS3

PlayStation 3 £425

You know that in the long-term it's best to get the best version of PS3.

TV

JVC LT-32DX7 £1,400

This excellent mid-priced 32-inch LCD TV offers excellent picture quality and sound, and comes with two HDMI ports so you can plug something as well as your PS3 into the back. Great performance at an affordable price.



SURROUND SOUND

Denon AVR1706 £215

Pioneer S-V320 £200



A rough guide to buying any sound components is that if it costs around £200, then it's going to be pretty good. These two components fit that idea and both offer excellent performance for that price.

BROADBAND

ntl £34.99 per month

The advantage of getting your broadband from ntl is that you don't need a phone line - it all comes down to a freely installed box and cable. This premier package offers an excellent speed of 10Mb (perfect for all your Internet use) and unlimited usage.

GAME

Three launch games £150

We reckon three games will do it at launch - how about *Rainbow Six Vegas*, *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *F1 06*? Nice bit of variety and should keep you playing for a couple of months.

TOTAL £2,425

MONEY NO OBJECT

PS3

PlayStation 3 £425

Of course you're going to want the top-of-the-range PS3.

TV

46" Sony Bravia X-Series £4,000

When money's no obstacle then this is the TV to set your sights on. It's the only TV out there that can display the holy grail of 1080p - the highest resolution (1920 x 1080) that PS3 (or any other games console for that matter) can display. Ideal for Blu-ray and it looks beautiful too.



SURROUND SOUND

Lexicon RV-8 Home Cinema Receiver £5,500

Mission Elegante e82 6.1 Home Cinema Speaker Package £2,800



BROADBAND

be* Broadband £75 per month plus £24 connection fee

PlayStation 3 can handle broadband speeds of up to 1Gb. While there is no provider in the world that can match this speed yet, this is the closest you'll get. At 24Mb you'll have no worries at all when it comes to online gaming, downloading and uploading, video chat and anything else you can think to throw at this. It's kind of pricey, but when money's no object...

GAME

All 15 launch games £750

If you want to get the full PS3 experience from day one, then what better way to do it than with every single launch game?

TOTAL £13,575

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PS3 Publisher//Sony Developer//Ninja Theory Genre//Beat-'Em-Up Players 1 Release Date//TBA

*Akin to the
mighty God
Of War
only with a
female lead,
Heavenly
Sword
purports to
have some
of the best
third-person
combat ever
witnessed
in a
videogame.*

Looks that kill and a body to die for Heavenly Sword

WHETHER the PS3 revelations at E3 left you cold or even more excited, there's no denying that some of the games look truly stunning. Ninja Theory's *Heavenly Sword* is one of those games. A potential release title, this is one of the few that has kept our faith in Sony's latest wonder-console. Forget DualShock being dropped and some missing output round the back – if the games aren't up to scratch none of that will matter anyway. If *Heavenly Sword* is anything to go by then PS3 has nothing to worry about on the games front.

This isn't the first time *Heavenly Sword* has been shown, footage was screened at last year's E3. Cynics that we are, we scoffed at the mere thought of the images being in-game rather than some sort of render mock-up. Never have we been so pleased to be proved wrong. After lengthy development, *Heavenly Sword* looks like the reason to start saving for a PS3, as if you needed one already. In the intervening year between E3s, little more has been said on the title, mainly due to Sony's usual tight-lipped manner. While there's still plenty to learn about the game, this year's E3 gave us plenty of info to go on.

A tale of revenge, *Heavenly Sword* sees you filling the shoes of ass-kicking red-head Nariko as she embarks on a quest to defeat an invading king and his armies. The 'sword' of the title once belonged to a powerful deity, and if wielded by a mortal it will drain their life-force within hours. The sword is protected by a clan, but an invading king kills the protector, and Nariko, who happens to be the

daughter of the clan leader, takes up the sword and vows to avenge her fallen father even if it kills her.

Akin to the mighty *God Of War* – only with a female lead – *Heavenly Sword* purports to have some of the best third-person combat ever witnessed in a videogame. This is a big claim from a developer whose best known title to date is the so-so *Kung Fu Chaos*, but the game has been in development for over three years so there's certainly been time to perfect it. The thing that has us all excited is the free-style approach to the combat, which allows players to quickly switch between sword types and other weapons on-the-fly without the need to enter annoying menus. The *Heavenly Sword* itself can transform into three different stances which the player can switch between at will, allowing them to develop their own distinctive fighting style. The combat engine can quickly adapt during play to account for increased enemies and will alter moves accordingly, which looks like it will create some truly stunning visuals. The enemies aren't just stupid grunts; they've been programmed to react like a squad, protecting each other or attacking in groups to keep their offensives unpredictable, and avoid the usual button bashing found in this sort of game. There is a whole range of weapons with which to fend off your attackers, from spears to bazookas – we're guessing not the same sort you'd find in *Ghost Recon* or other such war games. You'll need everything you can lay your hands on, as you'll be

ABOUT
HEAVENLY
SWORD:
GOD OF WAR
MEETS DYNASTY
WARRIORS ON
PLAYSTATION 3

PREVIEW: HEAVENLY SWORD // HAZE ▽

"The camera will go into a cut-scene-like state when Nariko performs a good counter or kill, allowing you to bathe in her glory"

"Not only does he play the part of main villain, King Botan, he has also taken a keen interest in character development"

GOLLUM ON BOARD



Star Power Gollum gets a new role

Andy Serkis, best known for his CGI-aided roles as Gollum in *Lord Of The Rings* and King Kong in, well... *King Kong*, has had a major role in the creative process of *Heavenly Sword*. Not only does he play the part of main villain, King Botan, he has also taken a keen interest in character development, writing, casting and performance capture for the game. Having someone with his experience on board is sure to do *Heavenly Sword* no harm whatsoever, as long as he doesn't decide to give the king Gollum's voice. That would just be silly.

Whether any other big name stars are taking parts in *Heavenly Sword* is yet to be announced, but we wouldn't bet against Nariko having a mildly famous celeb providing her voice.

CONTINUATION //

facing hordes of enemies at once not just a handful. This is PS3 remember and it easily render dozens of enemies on screen at once. That's not to say all enemies are in one big group, the environments are huge and you'll be able to see bad guys for miles around. Rather than them simply spawning when you enter the next area, you'll be able to see them. They won't just stand around waiting for you to go to them, most will head to your position, and you'll be able to see the next wave on the horizon. Just because they're not right next to you doesn't mean you can't stop their advances, and this is where weapons like the bazooka come in handy. Simply fire a projectile at them, and those who don't get out of the way in time will experience burning hot death, or some other unpleasant end.

Much of the environment can also be used to your advantage. You can sweep debris at enemies or kick objects at oncoming groups in an attempt to slow their advance. Some of this debris can be controlled mid-flight if you press a button quickly enough. Do so and you'll be given an object-eye-view that let's you apply a little aftertouch to ensure the projectile reaches its target. Enemies can also be

thrown into scenery or other enemies, allowing for plenty of spectacular combos that'll see you taking down a gang of goons in a few simple moves. Counters and kill moves can turn an enemy's attack into a devastating offensive for the player and if timed correctly can result in a bloody and quick death for the poor soldier. Performing combos will also fill a meter at the bottom left of the screen and once full it allows you to unleash a devastating move that eliminates most smaller enemies outright. These moves are mainly in the boss battles which require different approaches, some of which will be familiar to *God Of War* fans.

All this action employs some of the best physics we've seen. Not only do the objects fly around and land convincingly, but also the characters do the same making the whole thing appear movie-like.

The dynamic camera also adds to this movie quality – zooming in and out, panning around the action, but always staying focused on the action and, of course, Nariko. The camera will go into a cut-scene-like state when she performs a good counter or kill move, which makes all your effort worthwhile, allowing you to bathe in the glory of a great move.



✦ In 'light attack', the sword is used in its chain-sword style, enabling you to attack enemies from range.



✦ Beautiful, oriental environments await you for exploring, admiring and, naturally, as a backdrop to kicking the bejesus out of enemies.



This perfect blend of quality combat and seamless camera movement is rare. All these enemies and camera positioning almost make *Heavenly Sword* sound too frenetic for its own good. It's all well and good being an assault on the senses, but you need to be able to control that assault for it to be any fun. Thankfully, it looks like the combat is relatively simple with most moves being easy to pull off no matter how complicated they look on-screen – that's not to say it doesn't need honing. There's plenty of time to work on such things.

Of course, the combat isn't constant and there's plenty of exploration involved along with a few puzzles – nothing too taxing. Having such a large draw distance means that exploration means exactly that. You can look down a certain route to see if it's worth following, rather than traipsing all the way down it only to discover that you needed to go another way. This isn't always the case and most of the time you'll probably want to explore anyway, but it's nice to be able to see what lies ahead.



We've mentioned so many awesome things, you might wonder what else could get us excited about *Heavenly Sword* but there's plenty more. We haven't even mentioned the facial expressions yet. You'd expect Nariko to have detailed and accurate expressions, but not the rest of the characters, particularly the grunts that you kill throughout the game. Well Ninja Theory obviously felt sorry for the poor blighters and have blessed them all with multiple expressions. Obviously they

✦ No, not in game but rather a still from the announcement trailer. Ninja Theory does promise that scenes like this will make the final game.

Heavenly Sword

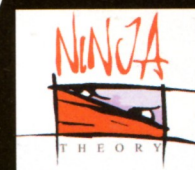
DEVELOPER HISTORY



✦ *Kung Fu Chaos* appeared on Xbox and was sadly overlooked by almost every who had one.

Past Form

The origins of Ninja Theory



In October of 2004 Argonaut Games PLC and its subsidiaries were forced into administration including Just Add Monsters Ltd. (JAM) the developer of *Kung Fu Chaos*. Without Jez

San and the former directors of JAM, *Heavenly Sword* may no longer exist as they swooped in and bought back the business including all the next-gen technologies and the *Heavenly Sword* intellectual property. This reborn developer was christened Ninja Theory and it has been hard at work crafting a truly next generation title ever since.

Some may wonder about the team's pedigree having garnered mixed reviews for *Kung Fu Chaos*, its debut title. Whatever you think of the game it showed an early desire to try something new and original. Microsoft obviously appreciated that and was clearly confident enough in the product that it signed it up as an Xbox exclusive. The game harked back to kung-fu movies of the Seventies, particularly those of the legendary Bruce Lee. Up to four players could battle it out on huge interactive movie sets that provided an abundance of fast-paced stunts and brawling action. Sadly it looks like people just didn't get it at the time and the game didn't exactly set the charts on fire. *PowerStone* fans, however, were grateful to have a spiritual successor to their beloved beat-'em-up and lapped the title up.



✦ *Heavenly Sword* clearly builds upon the beat-'em-up dynamic in *Kung Fu Chaos* in terms of variety of moves and the level of violence.



WEAPONRY



Swordplay

So many ways to kick ass...

With so many moves and weapons at her disposal Nariko can defeat her enemies in any number of ways. However, combos are where the combat really comes into its own. Swinging the chained blades around, *God Of War*-style, enables you to hit multiple enemies at once and send them spilling in all directions like skittles. That's not the end of it though, time your moves correctly and the enemies caught in your attack might just fly back into more waiting bad guys and if they don't, well, you can just pick them up and throw them.

Swinging the chained blades around, God of War-style, enables you to hit multiple enemies at once

ABOUT HEAVENLY SWORD:
TAKE OUT YOUR FOES AND FINISH FIRST BY ANY MEANS POSSIBLE



Nariko's hair reportedly uses one whole core of PlayStation 3's Cell processor all on its own.



The Eyes Have It

The devil really is in the detail

Those of you who have seen the trailer for *Heavenly Sword* already know how great it looks in motion, but sometimes details can be missed when everything is moving. Stills of said trailer have shown that the level of detail given to Nariko is truly astounding. Just look at her eyes, they're not just plain white as you'd expect. You can actually see tinges of red as if they're slightly blood shot. If you were up all night taking out your vengeance on an invading hoard then no doubt you'd have blood shot eyes too.

Heavenly Sword

✳ There's only one level shown here - an arena level specially constructed for an E3 demo. The majority of stages will take part outdoors however.



"Without the processing power of the PS3 then much of what Heavenly Sword offers just wouldn't be possible"



✳ Specially implemented scripting has Nariko battle mid-air with enemies. Bullet time lives!



CONTINUATION //

all have a typical war face and one that expresses great pain or fear, but it doesn't end there. As we said earlier the soldiers form squads and within these squads you will sometimes see soldiers interacting with each other. Kill one of them and the other will be visibly upset - it's so simple, but adds a great deal of character to NPCs that you dispose of without a second thought.

Nariko obviously has another level of detail compared to these non-playable enemies, which is difficult to see in screenshots that don't really do the game justice. Her hair, in particular, looks heavy and solid in stills; when in motion on the other hand, it makes you wish no other developer had ever bothered to animate long hair before just so they could learn how to do it properly from Ninja Theory.

Not everything in *Heavenly Sword* is particularly original; comparisons to *God Of War* are obvious with not only a chain weapon at your disposal but also context-

sensitive cut scenes. That's not a bad thing mind you - letting the player have control throughout a level rather than stopping for a cut-scene every so often is something we're all for. Although, when the cut-scenes look this good we don't mind too much.

Looks are something we've barely touched on yet, perhaps because it's simply expected for a PS3 game to look stunning or perhaps because *Heavenly Sword* contains so much else to talk about. Just because we haven't felt the need to gush about the visuals yet doesn't mean they have taken a back seat to the gameplay, far from it. Not only is Nariko's character animation fantastic and fluid, but the same is true of all the other characters too. The backgrounds are suitably amazing... well, just check out these screenshots and you can see how great it all looks. The lighting is gentle and gives the game a soft hue that makes it feel like a living, breathing world.

Looks and gameplay aside, there are still plenty of things we are yet to learn about *Heavenly Sword*. How does the health work? Is it constantly drained when Nariko is wielding the sword, meaning you have to be sparing with its usage? Will health be a simple power up along with other such collectables? Can weapons be powered up the same as they are in so many other games of this type? Can Nariko swing on ropes or climb walls? All these and many more questions will hopefully be answered in the coming months leading up to the release of the PS3 and, of course, the game itself. Even if the answers aren't what you want to hear then console yourself that *Heavenly Sword* is still looking to be an absolute corker of a game.

Ninja Theory freely admits that without the processing power of the PS3 much of what *Heavenly Sword* offers simply wouldn't be possible, which just goes to show what an impressive machine Sony has produced yet again. And if this is the sort of game we're getting in the first wave of releases, just imagine what we'll be gawping at a couple of years down the line. Gives us goose bumps just thinking about it. What Ninja Theory has shown is that as a Western developer it can do combat just as well as the Japanese. Forget your *Devil May Cry*s and your *Onimushas*, this is most certainly where it's at.

All this sounds great, but so often promises like this never come good. However, even at last year's E3 this was looking impressive and now, with plenty of in-game footage doing the rounds, this looks like to be an essential PS3 title whether it makes the launch-day line up or not. The fact that Ninja Theory has managed to deliver playable code that looks the same as tech demos from a year ago is astounding, but shows that sometimes developers *can* deliver their promises no matter how far fetched. Yes, *Killzone*, *Motorstorm* and *Metal Gear Solid* are looking amazing, but two of those are sequels. If Sony wants to really get the hardcore gamers behind its new console then it needs a title that brings something new. Sequels will sell plenty of units, but, in a market where reputation is so important, it helps to have something a little different to offer. It's true that *Heavenly Sword* isn't the most original game we've ever seen but it contains enough well executed elements, stunning visuals, and gameplay to match that it has reignited our passion for the often maligned console. If Nariko doesn't show here face on launch day don't be disheartened, she's worth the wait.

%complete



✳ Look sharp, you can see in Nariko's blood-shot eyes that *Heavenly Sword* will hold something special within its shiny PS3 case.



ESB Publisher//Ubisoft Developer//Free Radical Genre//FPS Players//TBA Release Date TBA 2007

PREVIEW

HAZE

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PLAYSTATION 3

We don't often get genuinely hot under the collar about effects and visuals, but you can't deny the impressiveness of these in-game shots

Haze

Piercing the Haze of first-person shooters

MUCH is made nowadays of the institution of war – the idea that conflict is neither a by-product of democracy's inability to offer new physical territories and resources, or simply an economy-boosting industry, but absolutely vital to any society. It's an obvious concept, given the amount of workers involved in that particular sphere of commerce, and one that seems sensible considering the potential hike in unemployment should the defense industry ever suffer a collapse, forced or otherwise. This kind of attitude not only allows governments to, quite literally, get away with murder, but also allows us to feel slightly better about the whole thing by giving us the opportunity to take a negative view of the act of war, whilst taking a neutral stance on the military institution. It's one of those happy mediums that's just the right side of palatable for the masses, but allows those in power to go about their business with the minimum of hassle from the public. While capitalists argue that democracy and the free market are the best promoters of peace – because war is as bad for every other industry as it is good for defense – pretty much everyone else is of the opinion that capitalism breeds conflict. There's a little known

theory floating about at the moment called the broken window fallacy, named thus because of the comparison between war and petty vandalism. Think, if you will, of a shopkeeper. Sometime last night a drunken lout launches a brick through the window of his gleaming grocery store. It's easy to see the knock-on benefits from an economic point of view: the act of breaking the poor guy's window facilitates the movement of currency so vital to any economy, and extrapolated out, the absence of any bricks through any windows would cause the collapse of the entire glazing industry, making the mindless hoodlum more of a social benefactor than a senseless thug. This idea falls down however, when you consider that the shopkeeper would otherwise have had a perfectly serviceable window as well as the money it cost him to replace it. Money he would no doubt have delivered to another part of the economy. In essence, it's all too easy to see the economic benefits of minor vandalism, or indeed a major war, but ignore the simple fact that war costs. Not only lives, but economic stability. One in the eye perhaps, for those who cite economy boosting as a reason for war. So what do we do? What options do we have? What is the future of war?

CONTINUATION//

In a word, *Haze*. Before you say it, or even think it, this isn't the same old look-it's-a-futuristic-shooter-on-the-PS3-we-can-use-the-phrase "future of war" gumpf but a genuine comment on the growing intricacy of videogame backdrops. Of course there's a large part of our collective videogame journalist persona that's dying to use that particular turn of phrase and if we're honest we did kind of shoehorn it in, but the point still stands – *Haze*, in many respects, is the future. Seemingly having taken our rantings on board, the governments of the world have decided that war is just far too messy a business to be dabbling in. 20-odd years into the future, The UN and NATO disbanded, the world's governments have, quite sensibly, done away with their defense programs in favour of freelancing out their military requirements. Whilst the concept is a reasonably sound one, the idea of this new military sledgehammer being overseen by a power-hungry group of capitalist moguls isn't one that stands out as being particularly clever. Now, if it were us, we'd go for something with a little better regulation, or at very least a yearly external audit. It probably sounded like a great idea at the time, but with the aforementioned industrialists at the helm, you can be pretty sure things will go horribly nasty before the end. Indeed, much of what developers Free Radical have said about the title centers around a degree of emotional intensity that, if they're to be believed, we've never previously seen in a shooter. The Nottingham based team's main objective throughout the development of *Haze* was to raise the bar on the action-emotion experience. Apologies again for squeezing in another of those overused clichés, but it's probably worth noting that this is another case where it appears, from all we can glean from Ubisoft, that there has been a decent vertical shift in the said rod. The trailer, for example ends not – as is so often the case – with the appearance of some marauding alien or enemy terror, but with some kind of internal, psychological horror borne, no doubt, from Nectar – a substance spoon fed to the frontline infantry to make them smarter, faster and that much harder. It's this concentration on the emotional side of things that hints at something else, something more complex, more cerebral, more, in a word, better. Indeed, the entire trailer has a dark humour about it reminiscent of a Paul Verhoeven sci-fi action flick, winding up hinting at some kind of deep emotional trauma working its way into the ranks. If we were a little bolder, we'd make the assertion that somewhere along the line you'll be up against your own army pals, we might also make the intrepid assumption that you'll be seeking, at some point, to bring down the huge military übergiga-superconglomerate, Mantel Corporation. We're not though, so we won't.

☛ **Haze: to persecute or torture somebody in a subordinate position, for example, a first-year military academy cadet.**

☛ **And you thought that PlayStation2 jungle was impressive. Next-gen gaming equals better jungle.**

"The demos hint at something far, far beyond what we've seen of the narrative so far"

Mantel wants you!

Would you like to know more?

"Do you want to make a difference in this world?" Slimes the greaseball at the start of the *Haze* trailer. "Join the right team...", he says, "the winning team". Motivational stuff of the *Robocop*/*Starship Troopers* ilk, the trailer displays the kind of grisly humour not often witnessed in the industry. Showing various scenes of military bonding, victory and irresponsible gunplay, our man at Mantel prattles on about giving you the best weapons, making you stronger and a wealth of inspiringly spun drivel about war and heroism, all set to an uplifting tune. The whole thing's steeped in machismo, but takes a darker turn as you're introduced to a lone grunt suffering from some kind of rage attack. He's seen ripping his communication rig from his back and pumping the nearby shops with hot lead then attacking the camera. For a trailer featuring no in-game footage, it sticks out as another example of how committed Free Radical is to creating something different. See it at hazegame.com.

As far as concrete details of the storyline go, what few facts there are sound like a fairly straightforward affair, offering little insight into the real meat of the narrative. Mantel Global Industries, your new employer, tackle a majority of the world's conflicts as well as having giant sweaty fingers in practically every commercial pie around, a Halliburton for the future if you will. Combining two of their more profitable enterprises, namely military and biomedical, Mantel have managed to engineer the long sought after golden chalice of conflict: the super soldier. You play as Sergeant Jake Carpenter, following his fortunes over his first three days on the job with all the best equipment, weapons and support. Guerilla fighters have overthrown the government in South America – one of the risks you take when you do away with your defense budget – and Mantel dive in to mop up the insurgency. By the end, we're assured that he will have changed irrevocably; the fresh faced victim of Mantel Corps's recruiting campaign becoming something else entirely. There's a lot more however, of that we're certain, but from the scratchy details we've managed to weasel out of developers and PRs we can't

make head nor tail of it. There are sections of play demanding an exploration of your moral fibre, as civilians run into your targeting reticule begging for their life, as well as numerous other choices of that ilk. Far from offering the turgid likes of a good/evil bar these ethical dilemmas seem to be the key to unveiling the truth behind *Haze*. Indeed many of the demos we've witnessed hint at something far, far beyond what we've seen of the narrative so far. We're already in the realm of speculation here, and to delve any further into the unknown would be irresponsible. Suffice it to say that it's the storyline – and the possibilities it offers the player – that's really got its meat hooks in us.

A darker experience than Free Radical's previous endeavors with the *Timesplitters* series then, but there are undoubtedly lessons to take from having crafted three of the PS2's most popular FPSs, and further quality to be derived from the tender guiding touch of David Doak, the creative noggin behind both *Goldeneye* and *Perfect Dark*. We can be assured a substantial single-player experience,



✕ This is a wireframe of a forest. There are surprisingly few polys, given the beauty of the visuals - it's all about shading nowadays.



ABOUT HAZE:
THE FIRST NEXT-GENERATION GAME TO MAKE A BOLD NARRATIVE STATEMENT

✕ It's these armoured transport ships that serve to move you between 'levels'.



Haze

✕ Some folk believe that *Haze* is all about Mantel corporation chopping down the rainforests. It's not.



Conspiracy theories

What is this FPS really all about?

There's much about *Haze* that just doesn't match up with the standard FPS. Little teaser hints dropped by development team members here and there, demos with bizarre happenings, and, of course, that trailer. There are a number of hypotheses floating around in the ether of that wonderful Internet, and despite the fact that a vast majority of them have been generated by bored teens with a little too much time on their hands, we feel it necessary to divulge a few of the more (and less) credible versions.

Theory One: **Sweet nectar**

Simple, and more than likely this one, but Mantel Corps are keeping the troops subdued with their 'Nectar' Substance, which causes the occasional psychological issue with a small number of military personnel. You play as one of the affected infantrymen, and with your enhanced mind and body attempt to take on the entire corporation.

Percentage chance: **40%**

Theory Two: **Matrix revisited**

This is a little bit *Matrix*, but some folk reckon that you're actually not fighting in the war you think you're fighting in. Evidence for this comes from an E3 demo that showed - once the player's teammates had opened fire on a civilian - the screen flicker and error messages appear. There are shades of virtual reality, holosuites and apocalyptic wars present, but whether the game will take it that far is debatable.

Percentage chance: **28%**

Theory Three: **Media clash**

We don't rate this one much, but the idea that the war is simply the result of Mantel Corporation muscling in on some smaller company's territory is hovering around at the minute. Using Nectar, Mantel are convincing their troops to demolish the rivals, creating a whole new marketplace for the gigantic multi-national.

Percentage chance: **20%**

Theory four: **Virtual insanity**

Simple, and if it weren't for the fact that *Assassin's Creed* is already doing something similar we'd probably be more inclined to go along with this one. The player isn't actually in the future at all, but you play a guy in some kind of virtual reality suite. It could be for training purposes, or just for fun, but in a way, you are, in reality, playing yourself. Whoa... heavy.

Percentage chance: **12%**

Talking with



Derek Littlewood
Creative Director

Mike Armstrong
Technical Director

Rob Yescombe
Screenwriter

"It asks questions that you won't have seen in a game before - questions and issues that are worth debating"

How did you come up with the concept of the game, and how has this concept changed as development progressed?

I think the game is very close to our original intention. So in terms of development, our task has been to find as many intelligent ways to facilitate that action-emotion experience as possible. And certainly, Ubisoft's input has been invaluable thanks to their own experience in creating tactically rich, narrative-led experiences.

Could you describe that narrative?

Guerrilla soldiers in a region of South America have overthrown the government. Mantel is called in to deal with the problem - to restore democracy to this war-torn land. To make things easier for their soldiers, Mantel's biomedical department has developed a 'nutritional supplement' called 'Nectar' that enables the troops to fight harder and smarter.

How will it differ from other next gen shooter games within the Ubisoft titles and within the competitors?

I think *Haze* has a pretty unique point of view on the presentation of war in games. I can't say too much about it at this stage but it asks questions that you won't have

seen in a game before - questions and issues that are worth debating even after you've finished it. We spent a lot of time analysing what it is you spend your time doing when playing a first-person shooter, and cherry-picked these abilities to enhance that experience.

Have you encountered any significant design or technology hurdles during development, or do you perhaps have some entertaining anecdotes?

Probably our biggest challenge has been to develop an AI system capable of communicating the intensity and range of emotions that *Haze* requires. Fortunately we've got some very talented AI coders and animators, who have really been able to bring those characters to life.

What is your experience with next generation consoles? Are they harder or easier to develop for over previous generations? What makes this so?

The process of creating graphics has become similar across all platforms, which, on the one hand, makes developing visuals for them easier. However, because the visual requirements are more complex than ever before, this means that the process is seriously complex - just in a different way.

ABOUT HAZE:
TIMESPLITTERS
CREATOR MAKES
FPS THAT
DOESN'T HAVE
ANY MONKEY
JOKES IN IT.

"Haze's ocular feast isn't the thing that's got us hooked, and that's something of an accolade"

CONTINUATION //

that's a given, while anticipation of a high quality narrative and multi-player modes is never going to be too far off the mark, given Doak and co's previous successes with the multi-player facet of their shooters. *Haze* will not only feature objective based competitive maps, something Free Radical Design rightly pride themselves on, but enables three additional players to dive into the main story mode. Rather than being limited to deathmatches however, each of the online maps - allowing for huge amounts of players at any one time - is not only linked to the main story mode, but has a unique set of objectives which we're guessing will offer some insight into the future of online first-person shootery.

So, three days in the life of Sgt Jake Carpenter, a handful of brain-melting 'nutritional supplements' and weapon loadouts purported to rival those of *Black*. What more do you need? Well, actually a fair bit. Artificial Intelligence, for one thing. AI's always been one of the most contentious issues surrounding first person shooters, and despite *Haze*'s quality lineage, the actual

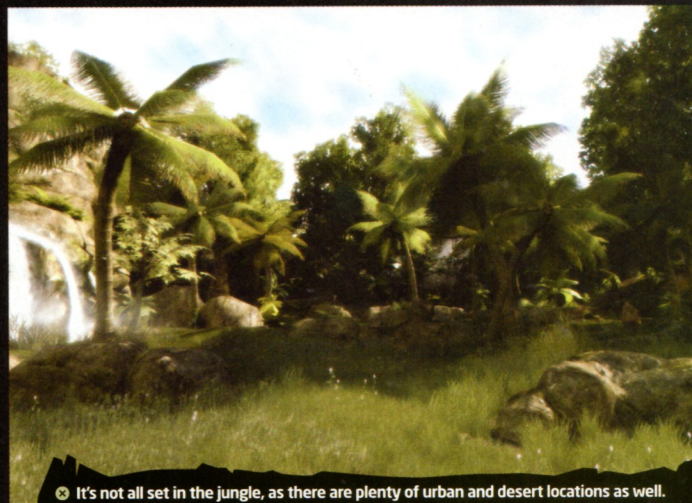
implementation of an AI system rarely hits the target created by the hype. *Haze* is a case in point, and citing their 'Conspire' system as having the superiority to "drop jaws on a worldwide scale", immediately inflames our suspicion gland. It'll be good, there's little doubt about that, as Free Radical aren't the types to suffer shoddy workmanship, but whether it's likely to set a precedent in the field is a different matter. We'd like to see it do so, and if anyone can you'd have to give fair odds that this bunch of FPS specialists can manage it, but as an early PS3 title it'll be interesting to note just how close to the hype mark *Haze*'s AI hits.

One feature we're pretty sure will work however, is a squad command system that sounds so brilliantly simple it can't really fail. A single tap of the D-pad to select a teammate, and another tap to dish out the orders. That may seem a little over simplified, but with context sensitivity there's room for an awful lot of options with very little hassle. To be honest though, the squad mechanic seems like something of a superfluity, offering an extra layer of depth should the player want it.



Fly my pretty... First impressions last.

Sure, everyone's doing stunning visuals on the PS3, and we're thankful for it. Indeed, we've had a frank and open discussion with the guys in the office, and it's fair to say that anticipation for the PS3 is greater than the Xbox 360. Why? Not because the visuals look any better than Microsoft's machine - because they don't - but because of the little things. Little things like the butterfly landing on your weapon if you stand still too long. It's not quite hyper-realism though, 'cos that never happens - try it for yourself and see how long it takes for a butterfly to land on you.



It's not all set in the jungle, as there are plenty of urban and desert locations as well.



Videogames don't kill people, murderers do. We saw it in a documentary on BBC2.



Perfectly happy to go about their bullet-heavy lives, it's not necessary to babysit your squad, as they're more than capable of looking after themselves up against the poorly armed rebel forces. These miserable dogs, The Promise Hand are lead by the psychopathic wannabe despot, Gabriel Merino, lovingly monikered 'Skin Coat', for his apparent penchant for wearing a jacket fashioned from the skins of former prisoners of war. This is another example of Free Radical's clear attempt at raising their narrative game for the PS3. Is this 'Skin Coat' a real enemy of peace, or has he been tarred with propaganda and feathered with demonization in order to further the justifiable cause argument for the conflict? Are these rebels really fighting for conquest? Who, in reality, are the bad guys here?

It's hardly going to be much of a fight if these rebels are as poorly armed and supported as they initially seem, indeed, not playing as the underdog makes us feel distinctly more bad guy than we feel comfortable with. Much of the action gives across that feeling nicely, with terrified opposition forces leaping into cover and downing their weapons in craven surrender and Mantel support vehicles whooshing overhead or trundling around the battlefield. Of course the inclusion of vehicles in any FPS nowadays is pretty much essential, but as well as being used to break up the play and give you a new perspective on the action, vehicles play a part in creating a seamless

experience from start to finish. Set over the space of Carpenter's first three days on the job, the action is nothing like the start-stop experience filled with objective menus, loading screens and debriefing junk that we've come to expect of shooters. One of Free Radical's main objectives was to build on the level of immersion so important in the genre, rather than chip away at it with constant breaks in the gameplay. Playing through both night and day is another illustration of their commitment to generating and preserving this kind of immersion.

There'll be folks out there that may have noticed our lack of attention to the visuals, but whilst the graphics, particle effects and animation looks to be as good as anything we've seen on the PS3, Haze's ocular feast isn't the thing that's got us hooked, and that's something of an accolade. No, Haze's most attractive features are aspects we've not seen accomplished well in the past. Continuous, unfettered, and immersive gameplay, an emotionally driven storyline worthy of genuine debate, AI that not only acts cleverly and realistically, but gets across a genuine feeling of personality and character: all



these elements, should their implementation be anything like we expect, offer not just an elevation in the genre, but definition. As Haze scraps it out against all the other original IPs out there - *Crysis*, *Assassin's Creed*, *Gears Of War* and *Prey* to name but a few - we can't help but make a sneaky mental bet with ourselves that Haze will come out on top, not because of doing things better, but because it's doing things differently.

D'you know, sometimes, caption writing is a difficult job. Above, another jungle and gun shot. How do you say something interesting about that?

%complete



The Darkness

The kind of game that revels in being sick and twisted, in human viscera and finding the black humour in murder most foul

IT'S 2006. Some of us are getting old. Some of us are perhaps a little podgier than we thought we'd be when we 'grew up'. We don't know about you, but we sure as hell noticed that particular indicator of age. Forgive the we're-getting-old rant, but at the dawn of a new console it's difficult to keep your mind away from the fact that you're drifting toward a future filled with 'nice warm cardigans' and the feeling that things aren't what they used to be. It's with that in mind then, that a rather depressing thought occurs. How many bad games have we played over the years? We tried working it out, but the maths was beyond us. Suffice it to say, it's an amount of truly colossal proportions. What's worse is the share of weak titles on our shelves compared to truly top-notch games. Think about it.

So what draws us in? What makes us continue to look forward to titles we

know in our heart of hearts, despite boundless promise, will be just another forgettable action adventure, FPS or movie tie-in? More than likely the juvenile assumption that developers will use every ounce of the potential to create the best game possible. This rarely happens though, does it? All too often we're led to believe that the next big title will actually achieve the heights we expect of modern games, only to be frustrated and mildly upset when it finally hits the shelves.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, we sound like old cynics, but we still love games, and every now and again we get the feeling something special's coming up. You probably wouldn't believe us if we told you that one such game is based on a comic book character, and you'd be even more surprised if we told you that it's to be launched in conjunction with a high budget Hollywood movie.

What we're talking about here is *The Darkness*, a title based on one of the newer breed of graphic novels from Top Cow Productions. It speaks volumes for the comic book studio that they can make a dent in a market so heavily dominated by Marvel and DC, but the studio founded by legendary comic book creator Marc Silvestri back in 1992 is already

This guy clearly doesn't believe in a thing called love

Talking with



Magnus Högdahl
Technical Director

Mikael Säker
Story & Game Designer

Jens Andersson
Lead Designer

"In the end, who wouldn't want to be a cool mafia hit man with demonic superpowers?"

With the PS3 release date and specs now public who out of the big three do you think has the advantage when it comes to the battle for next-gen supremacy?

I think the Xbox 360 and PS3 are close enough in raw horsepower. It will really come down to which platform has the better games and online services. The PS3 will have a content size advantage with Blu-ray and a Central Processing Unit (CPU) advantage for titles that are able to utilize a lot of the SPUs.

How does *The Darkness* differ from the numerous comic-book conversions we've seen already?

There are a number of problems when transferring two dimensional media to three dimensional - be it to film or videogame. Our approach with *The Darkness* is that we wanted realism. We have created a *real* world out of the comic. This has its own unique implications and *The Darkness* comic world has been adapted accordingly, all to get the right game-flow and drama.

Why do you think comic-book franchises still captivate gamers?

Action heroes in games also share many traits with comic heroes (superpowers, weaknesses, a clear goal etc) so videogame adaptations of comics come quite naturally. And in the end, who wouldn't want to be a cool mafia hit man with demonic superpowers?

***The Darkness* has recently changed publisher; has the move to 2K Games meant anything different in terms of game content or direction?**

2K Games have given us some additional budget and development time, which of course has a great impact on the quality of the game. We are very happy to work with them.

Former publisher Majesco has experienced financial difficulties of late; do you think this will become a more common occurrence for developers as next-gen development costs rise?

I think we have seen a consolidation among publishers for a long time, driven by the economies of scale in this industry. The big ones have some advantages over the smaller ones.



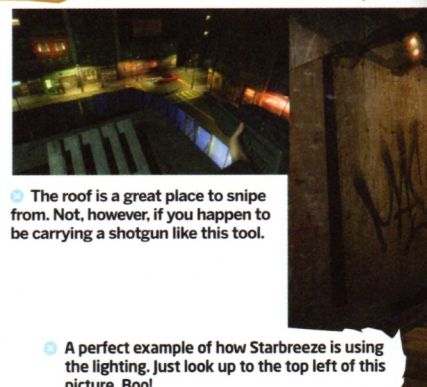
CONTINUATION//

something of a major player in the industry. Very much linked to the videogames market and responsible for titles like *Tomb Raider*, *Fear Effect*, *City Of Heroes* and the hugely successful *Witchblade*, Top Cow is the hot property in the realm of comic book art, despite a few setbacks in its relatively short life.

On to *The Darkness* then, and anyone in the know will be wetting their lips in anticipation of a title based on a comic pivoted so firmly on brutal, visceral violence - and there's nothing we like better than videogame violence. Centered around a kind of sentient super power *The Darkness* charts the life and times of Jackie Estacado, a mafia hitman recruited at age 16 with a lifestyle high in sex, murder and debauchery content. At 21 however, things change for the carefree Estacado, and he's given control of an enormous power: The Darkness. As the name might suggest, this power only works in the absence of light,

but when night falls (or the lights go out) Jackie becomes unstoppable, with the ability to create pretty much anything from living creatures to weapons to giant feeding tentacles. Since his symbiotic relationship with The

Darkness began, Jackie Estacado has been involved in numerous adventures, not least when he blew his mafia family up, including himself, and wound up with a small eternity in hell. He's even been involved with The Hulk, Superman and Batman in his time. With these morals, you'd think he'd make a lousy good



• The roof is a great place to snipe from. Not, however, if you happen to be carrying a shotgun like this tool.

• A perfect example of how Starbreeze is using the lighting. Just look up to the top left of this picture. Boo!

guy, but having read one or two of the graphic novels, we have to say he's a pretty likeable character, and one with plenty of character and a good deal of complexity - perfect fodder for any videogame.

So how far does this drive into the upcoming videogame? Well, given Top Cow's affiliation with graphic novel licences like *Tomb Raider* and developer Starbreeze's massive success with their last title *The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay*, you have to imagine that the chances of a true transition from ink to pixels are high. Indeed it's almost as if the game engine used for *The Darkness* was made for comic book tie-ins, emphasizing the contrasts between light and shadow. It's not just the visual elements that have received attention from Starbreeze, as the powers given by *The Darkness* translate perfectly to videogame, but more on that later.

So why are we so excited about *The Darkness*? After all, it is a comic book/movie tie-in, and without wanting to dwell on the fact, recent titles like *Fantastic Four*, *Marvel Nemesis: Rise Of the Imperfects* and *X-Men: The Official Games* simply haven't delivered anything





✖ This is a touch of overkill if you ask us. Why waste bullets when you've got Darklings about.



⚡ Starbreeze hasn't said anything about a squad mechanic, so we can assume these guys are going to die.



but disappointment, annoyance and giant piles of steaming pony.

We've read all the hype dished out by the developers, publishers and PRs and unlike the aforementioned dross, it seems both genuine and reasonably understated.

Obviously, with *The Chronicles Of Riddick* receiving the acclaim it has, there is something of a pull on the team to spatchcock many of the elements of that FPS into this one, a process that you could easily see stifling the level of innovation *The Darkness* might benefit from. Thankfully, that's something Starbreeze have avoided, citing *Chronicles* as being a very different game. Much of the atmosphere in the Xbox hit was derived from level design and sparse weaponry options, forcing players to seek out one of the myriad ways

Comic Genius

Jackie Estacado's coming of age

The second Jackie Estacado turned 21 he was given the huge power of The Darkness. In the earlier stages of his life with this grisly affliction it aided him greatly in his career as a hitman, becoming more difficult as he discovered The Brotherhood Of The Darkness, a band of darkness followers who want to capture him and somehow steal his powers. With all this going on, Jackie chose to quit the mob and start a new, crime-free life lodging with an old crone, but found it a good deal more difficult than he originally envisioned. In order to stop Jackie from flying the nest, his adoptive uncle and mafia don Frankie Frenchetti kidnapped a long time friend of Jackie's. Of course things go horribly wrong at this point, Jackie's friend Jenny, is killed at the hands of Frenchetti, sending Jackie into a proper spaz attack - not something you'd want to do to someone with The Darkness. Torching a majority of his old mafia mates in revenge and popping down to hell for a bit, Jackie returns to find Frankie's cousin Paulie lauding it over the New York mob. Discovering Jackie's power and the existence of Jenny's long lost sister, Paulie blackmails Jackie into getting back into the whacking trade. Thoroughly sick of all this shit, and in a bout of carefree murder, Jackie then hunts down to kill Paulie, making him head of the entire clan.



The Darkness



The Darkness is, at every level, the kind of title we have been waiting for, for quite some time

Chirst mate, you might want to think about a little DIY, look at the state of your place.



ABOUT THE DARKNESS:
RUN AND GUN
IN A GRIMY NEW
YORK WITH THE
POWER OF THE
DARKNESS

I have the power...

A level in the life of Jackie Estacado

From what we've seen of *The Darkness*, the grisly powers come through nicely. In a recent demo these were displayed wonderfully well in a decidedly sickening - but equally humorous - scene opening with the tender image of a fat guy chucking human corpses around with glib inconsideration. Things swiftly go wrong (as things tend to do when you're handling human corpses) and the filth turn up kitted out with full riot gear to siege you out of the sumptuous building you're currently holed up in. Destroying what you thought was a fairly secure wall with the arse end of their riot van, the rozzers gain access to the building, causing huge amounts of shit to hit the fan with messy, messy results. First out of the blocks, the Darklings rear their particularly ugly heads and start going at the fuzz with saws, pneumatic drills and other assorted tools. Next up, Jackie has a bash at taking out the cops with his sexy dual pistols, wastes a couple and goes in for some bone-crunching melee attacks. Ouch. Out in the open now, Jackie summons the dark tentacle, raises a black and white above his head and launches it at a bunch of unsuspecting (well, we dare say they suspected something nasty was going to happen, given all those dirty great big tentacles flying around) policemen. With the scene degenerating into chaos, it's not long before Jackie has the chance to sneak about and get up close and personal with a few more police. Rather brutally dispatching them with life-ending grapples, Jackie saunters through to the next room and offers up a black hole for the inhabitant's delectation. Slurping up everything in the room and allowing Jackie to stroll on past to a wall mounted TV and turn it on, treating us to a dialogue about the in-game TV system. Clever.

CONTINUATION //

through the missions. Building on that, but utilizing the light/dark mechanic, Estacado's powers will offer some opportunities to advance through the levels as well as some nasty ways to dispatch your enemies. One of the key elements of both the comic and the game are the Darklings. These horrific beings are encountered within the bodies of only the sickest individuals and have decidedly grotesque hobbies. Summon one from a dingy corner of the room and they'll happily tear everything to shreds with whatever weapon they feel happiest with. Some tote golf clubs, some pick axes, saws and other DIY tools while others lug around giant jackhammers. But then very much at the core of the experience is an all out FPS feel. Being a professional hitman, Estacado has access to a huge array of weapons, and with so many enemies on his tail, he's going to need every bit of ammo he can lay his hands on. The Darklings aren't just a grim comic interlude to break up the gunplay, and along with Jackie's other powers, can be used to compliment the heavy blasting action by demolishing the enemy's cover and taking fire for Jackie whenever the going gets too tough for The Darkness' rejuvenative properties. The same is true of many of Jackie's other powers, and there's been a focus on making these powers compliment rather than replace the blasting action; indeed, one of the central themes is Jackie's struggle to control the unbelievable power given to him. Estacado, for example, can also summon great tentacles of evil with

the power to lift heavy items and launch them at enemies in a distinctly *Half-Life* fashion. These rather creepy appendages can also be used as spy cameras, allowing you to rummage around in the air vents and other assorted nooks looking for clues and potential routes through the exquisitely crafted levels. Another of the more disturbing uses for this Darkness stuff is the huge dripping maws you can summon to tear the bemused enemy to ribbons. These horrible manifestations can be used in the most visceral of fashions to shear, eviscerate and consume pretty much anything that stands in your way. One of many such expressions of *The Darkness*, it's this kind of sickening brutality that defines the gameplay and separates it from anything else we've seen before.

In fact, there's plenty more about *The Darkness* that warrants attention especially from a technological point of view. In an evolution from *Chronicle*'s individual motion capture, Starbreeze has employed a unique voice capture system that simultaneously snaps the facial and body movements of voice actors as they deliver their lines. It's actually quite a surprise how much of a difference this obvious technology makes, giving each of the individual characters truly unique personality. Similarly, the environments have seen a significantly greater level of consideration than we've ever seen before with a range of gritty urban locations spread across the seediest of cities, New York. Within the game, delivering information and adding to the build up of tension throughout, TVs show varying

Impish charm

These little monsters do more than just go 'bump' in the night

One of the most used of *The Darkness*' powers is the ability to call upon the Darklings, horrible scabby goblin type beasts created, it seems, by the malevolence within the more evil residents of Jackie Estacado's New York. Pretty much able to think for themselves, the imps' first priority is to kill, their second instinct to maim, and their third to destroy. Watching them charge headlong into a pile of live bodies and create obscene amounts of death delivers the kind of sinister bliss not often encountered in videogames, creating the kind of wince inducing scenes you're more likely to find in a low budget horror flick.



❖ *The Darkness* is undoubtedly one of the darkest games on the console. You'd expect that though, right?

❖ New York is pretty grotty in Starbreeze's *The Darkness*.

The Darkness

❖ *The Darkness*' New York isn't nearly as bustling as the real thing, but then that'd be quite horrible.

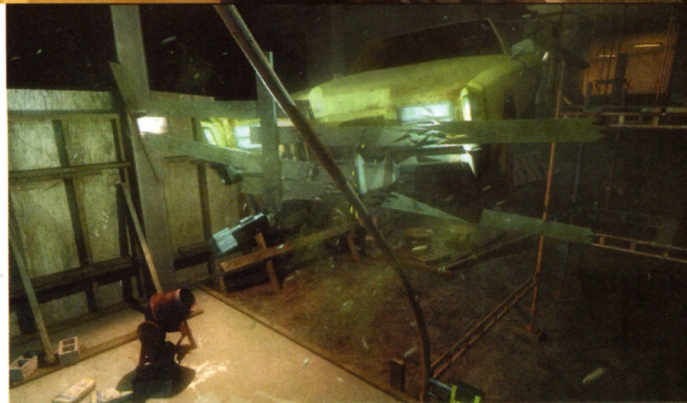
"When *The Darkness* rears its grotesquely ugly head the tension shifts up a gear"



with the "Resurrection" storyline to create the best videogame experience possible. Resurrection, one of the most dramatic story arcs in the series lends itself well to a videogame anyway, charting the results of Jackie's revenge attack on his former mafia family, and his attempt to regain Don status.

When weighing this type of game up, there are always questions, regardless of the pedigree of the developer or series. Admittedly in *The Darkness*' case these questions have mostly been answered, but even with the power of the PS3 and Starbreeze's quality, there's room for error. How involved will these Darkness powers be? The cynic could see them as a tagged on extra with little worth, added to make the licence a little more appealing to comic book fans. Similarly, the focus on all out gunplay could spoil the formula discovered with *Riddick*. Also, given the PS3's relatively unknown innards there's a chance that, much like any title at the early stages of a console's life, *The Darkness* won't reach its full potential.

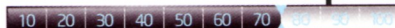
To be honest, we're nitpicking, and without sitting down for a few days with *The Darkness*, we're unlikely to get a proper handle on whether it's fulfilled its promise. What we would say, is that *The Darkness* is, at every level, the kind of title we've been awaiting



for some time, and given its ancestry, we're anticipating something unlike anything we've seen before. A success of *Riddick* proportions would open the floodgates for a wealth of Top Cow licensed games for the PS3, allowing heaps of vicious characters access to a whole new world of death and dark humour. Meanwhile, we're not getting any younger, and whilst we're gradually becoming more enamoured with the idea of a nice pair of slippers and a cup of tea, we have to say that, with *The Darkness* on the horizon, things definitely weren't better in our day.

❖ It's these awesome particle effects that make the busier parts of the game that much more realistic

%complete



❖ Hey, a bum. Wonder if he sells *The Big Issue*.

channels, streamed in real time, allowing you to kick back and watch a bit of telly before charging on to your next batch of foes, while boom boxes chuck out contemporary urban music. When *The Darkness* rears its grotesquely ugly head the tension shifts up a gear with the dynamic soundtrack, all demonstrating a real and functional use for Dolby 5.1. It's not merely a case of conjuring a taut ambience, but creating some complex aural environs to compliment the gritty visuals and grisly effects. In essence, what we're looking at here is something loaded with authentic dread and unadulterated horror very much in keeping with the feel of the comic books. In a word, success.

With the PS3's eagerly awaited online functionality, much was made in the early stages of *The Darkness*' development team's seeming unwillingness to include an online multi-player mode in *The Chronicles Of Riddick*. Whilst the fear of a lack of multi-player has recently been allayed, there's been nothing shown of the multi-player mode. Online play, however, will involve not troupes of Estacados, rather putting you in control of a Darkling. Past that Starbreeze has released little else, but with buckets of collectables and achievements, we're sure there'll be plenty of online fun to be had.

The storyline is something similarly lavished with attention, and with *The Darkness* writer Paul Jenkins on board, the quality of the narrative is likely to be on a par with anything seen in the comics. Indeed, Starbreeze have been given licence to toy

PS3 Publisher//Sony Developer//Incognito Genre//Shoot-'em-up Players//TBA Release Date//November 2006

PREVIEW ▼ THE DARKNESS / **WARHAWK** / ALONE IN THE DARK ▼

Warhawk

Never has flying

felt so natural

MOST people would know the name 'WarHawk' from the impressive demo that was showcased at E3 this year as part of the PlayStation 3's grand unveiling, but this game has been around a lot longer than that. Before E3, we were teased with what looked like in-game footage at the Tokyo Game Show last September, which showed us, for the first time, the sort of real-time visual complexity that the PS3 would be capable of. Before that, there was a trailer showing both aerial warfare and a glimpse of some soldiers on the ground, shown at E3 2005 alongside another few painfully short clips of in-progress PS3 projects. Most significantly, though, *WarHawk* was the name of one of the PSOne's launch games way back in 1995; indeed, this *WarHawk* is a re-imagining of that original title, meaning that this will be the second time that the game has ushered in a new age of videogame entertainment alongside a brand new Sony console. The game is a mix of science-fiction setting and Second-World-War-esque aerial dogfighting, with a smattering of on-ground warfare thrown in for good measure – all depicted in stunning detail thanks to the power of Sony's next-gen technology.

Anyone who played the first *WarHawk* will have a thorough grounding in this game's background. Elliot Hatch, the player character, piloted a futuristic aircraft, which fought alone against a massive swarm of enemies under the command of the game's villain, Krel,

who like so many misguided egomaniacs was aiming for world domination by harnessing a new type of energy for his own nefarious ends. At the time, a 3D free-flying aerial combat game was a huge technical challenge, and on the then-new PlayStation hardware it looked and sounded incredible for its time. It is most fondly remembered for its freeform control system, which quickly became second nature, and its brilliant array of weapons, including a devastating cluster bomb that could knock multiple enemies straight out of the sky. The game's only devastating problem was that it was a mere six levels long, leaving fans crying out for more; it was often postulated that the game's developer, SingleTrac, was hard-pushed to finish the game in time for launch and just couldn't fit everything they wanted to put into the game on a PlayStation CD.

That certainly won't be a problem now. PS3 Blu-ray discs can hold an obscene amount of data, although we don't yet know whether *WarHawk* will

use the new format instead of sticking with the long-established DVD game medium. Sony development studio Incognito, which is comprised of several members of the original *WarHawk* team, planned a remake for the PlayStation 2, but decided to wait until home console technology was good enough to realise an ultimate vision of the game. *WarHawk* PS3 is not a sequel, but a sort of update, although much has changed in 11 years besides the obvious graphical and aural improvements. The player is in charge of a new pilot, Zach Archer – Elliott Hatch is still in the game, as a commanding officer – against a redesigned Krel and his massive army, the Chernovans. You fight with the Eucadians in a persistent war that's going on all around you, whether or not you happen to be taking part in it – if you don't have a current mission objective, you can always find and join a fight going on somewhere nearby.

Of course, the most obvious difference between this *WarHawk* and its predecessor is the control system.

WARHAWK HISTORY



✗ *WarHawk* on PSOne was a pretty, if rather limited, flying/shoot-'em-up.

HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED

A quick revisit of the original *WarHawk*



Ah, 1995 – when game box art could still be nice, colourful illustrations instead of a CG scene or just some words stylishly splattered across the front. This was, as far as we can remember, the first aerial combat game on the original PlayStation, and one of the most impressive games of the time in terms of

showing off the new power of the CD. These screenshots may look rosey now, but once upon a time, they were beautiful.

Destroy the core

Pretty much all of *WarHawk*'s six levels involved destroying something big. If memory serves us correctly, this is in the middle of Kreel's oppressive fortress near the end of the game...



The fmv

Sadly we don't have any pictures of it, but the FMV sequences in *WarHawk* were hilarious – and not in a good way. The hammy actors, ill-advised real-time sequences and awful, awful sets make *Resident Evil 1* look good.

Memory card?

You actually couldn't save *WarHawk*. It would give you a password after each level, which allowed you to play the next one (although you could complete the whole game end-to-end in a few hours). No need for memory cards, but also extremely awkward.



Cluster bombs

Making a welcome return for the PlayStation 3 re-imagining, the cluster bombs rained pixelly death upon anything on-screen, causing

them to explode in a swirl of red and yellow squares. Thank God for post-32bit explosion effects.



✗ The camera can be locked onto any object keeping it in view at all times.



✗ Some of the planes look a bit different in these screenshots. Different planes, or just work-in-progress changes?



✗ Skilful flying will be a prerequisite for ground assaults. Although this plane isn't meeting much resistance.



✗ *WarHawk* promises an open-ended world, not simply a series of inter-connected islands.



✗ Cluster bombs. Fantastic. These devastate groups of small targets.

CONTINUATION//

Where the original game's natural and free controls attracted enormous praise at the time, this takes it to a whole new level with the PlayStation 3 controller's tilt functionality. You control the game almost entirely by moving the controller around, turning, climbing or diving through the skies with tilts in the appropriate directions and executing barrel rolls and other complex manoeuvres by tilting heavily (almost to the point of actually turning the controller upside down). Holding **R1** also rolls your ship, and the **X** and **Y** buttons are used to fire the currently selected weapons. Double-tapping **R2** gives a quick speed boost,

but the plane rockets along at its own fast pace without any intervention from you, just like in the original *WarHawk* – there are no acceleration thrusters, although the plane can switch in and out of hover mode with the **△** button. Hover mode gives you a steady aim and can be incorporated into some excellent evasive aerial acrobatic combos, but it also makes you a stationary target, and keeping on the move is of utmost importance in *WarHawk*. There are a ridiculous number of planes on-screen at any given time and avoiding all of them requires a considerable degree of skill and mastery – shooting them down requires even more concentration. Thankfully, the tilt controls are so intuitive that we didn't have any problems at all performing barrel rolls and Immelman turning manoeuvres within a few minutes of hands-on time with the game. It really is a small revolution in terms of control, and it works extraordinarily well on a flight-based game. There has never before been a console flight game that so intuitively conveys the exhilaration of flight, soaring unfettered by the shackles of gravity or diving towards

ABOUT
WARHAWK:
FANTASTICAL
FUTURISTIC
AERIAL WORLD
WAR WITH
THOUSANDS OF
PLANES



WarHawk

PREVIEW ► THE DARKNESS OF WARHAWK ALONE IN THE DARK ►

Flying into an enormous dogfight with several hundred ships is certainly an experience to be remembered

the earth before barrel rolling at the last minute and flying metres above the ground at the mere tilt of a controller. The Xbox's *Crimson Skies* came close, but the ease of *WarHawk*'s control system gives it an edge.

Enemies themselves are far from dumb targets. Although not quite of the standard of your own hover jet, their planes are capable of a good deal of evasive manoeuvres and destructive power. On-screen, lock-on targets are highlighted by a diamond, which is nowhere near as invasive as it sounds – the visual cue is near imperceptible until you actually target them, whereupon the diamond turns red. Larger enemy ships, though, as well as other objectives, are denoted with a large red diamond. It seems that much of the game will consist of taking down large ships whilst avoiding the fire of their protectors. There is a large arsenal of weaponry available, although we don't yet know if there will be any different planes to pilot – it seems reasonably likely. The hoverjet is equipped with a default primary machine gun and a secondary weapon set, which can presumably be equipped by the player as they deem appropriate. We've seen the return of the classic cluster bomb as well as powerful single-target rockets (useful for the larger ships) and an electricity gun, which could

be charged to deliver a devastating charge on target. The final game will contain many more weapons, though there's little indication of how they might function at present – will they all be available to use at any given time, or will the secondary weapon set be pre-determined by the player?

Graphically, the team at Incognito seems to be having a lot of fun with the PlayStation 3 hardware. At the moment there are over a hundred soldiers and ships on-screen at any one time, and Incognito is basically just cramming more and more in until the game can't take it any more. It's estimated that the final number of objects on-screen, with the game running at a smooth and consistent frame rate with all lighting and other graphical wizardry in place, will be around three hundred, although nobody really knows what the PlayStation 3 is capable of yet. Flying into an enormous dogfight with several hundred ships is certainly an experience to be remembered – sometimes there will be ally ships present as well as enemies, making for epic and spectacular air battles.

As would be expected, the game's environments look wonderful as well. Aside from the brilliant explosion and particle effects, there's a great heatwave blur and the rolling landscapes and shimmering water beneath the plane look amazing, even when you fly down right close to them. Also we've never been so excited by a cloud before in



A big surprise! Incognito in tilt-al control?

It's possible that Sony's new controller came as a surprise even to developers. In an interview with a New York Times journalist at E3, one of the members of the *WarHawk* development team allegedly said that they had not known about the controller's new capabilities until two weeks before the show, forcing them to shoehorn in the tilt functionality in order to show off its capabilities at the Sony E3 press conference. *WarHawk* has been in the making for some time now, although not in tangible form until this year's famous E3 demo, meaning that it's entirely possible, if not entirely probable, that Incognito had been working on the game without the motion-sensing technology until a few weeks before the show. We don't think it's really that likely, though – the motion sensing control method fits the game so well that we get the impression that the gameplay was built around it, with full knowledge of its potential. Maybe one of the developers at Incognito wasn't paying attention. Or maybe the fact that the control method works so well is a happy coincidence. Sony has refused to comment and the other members of the Incognito team have been sensible enough to keep their mouth shut, so we may never know.



✕ *WarHawk* not about simulation but rather the fantasy of flight.

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PLAYSTATION
3
next



Look, mum, no co-pilot!

WEAPONRY



WarHawk will leave behind the traditional mission-based structure to present what the developers are calling an 'open world'

✕ Extra weapons and power ups can be purchased online for use in the multi-player game.



Multiple targets

WarHawk's dynamic targeting

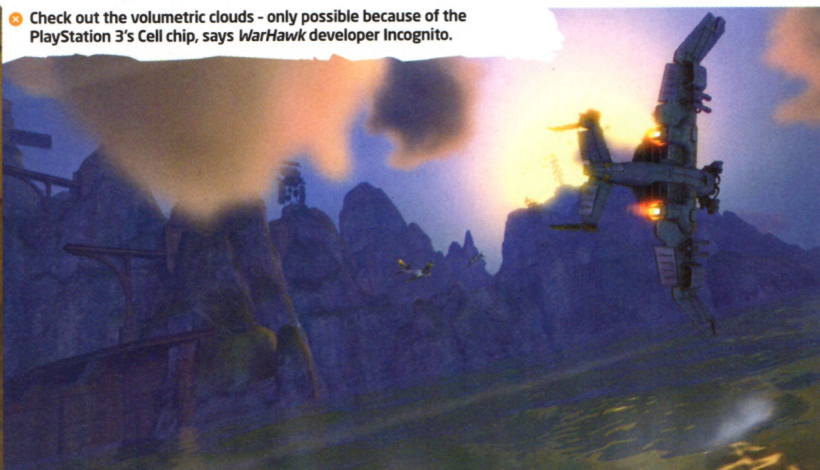
As in most games, the machine gun's aiming reticle changes colour depending upon whether it's pointed at an enemy or not. When you're searching for a lock-on target, though, things get a little more complex. Targetable enemies are highlighted with faint, inobtrusive diamonds - you can lob things like cluster bombs in their direction and they will target automatically. Once you're locked onto a particular enemy, the diamond turns red. Main enemies, like warships and larger plane targets, are always highlighted in red - taking them out early makes things a lot easier.



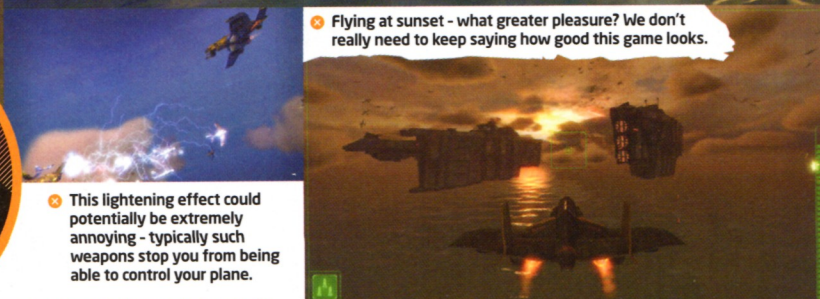
✦ We can expect spectacular finales to battles, with giant airships tumbling to earth in flames.

You could perform a vertical landing, leap out and start shooting planes from the air

✦ Check out the volumetric clouds - only possible because of the PlayStation 3's Cell chip, says WarHawk developer Incognito.



✦ Flying at sunset - what greater pleasure? We don't really need to keep saying how good this game looks.



✦ This lightening effect could potentially be extremely annoying - typically such weapons stop you from being able to control your plane.

CONTINUATION//

our lives (except the time that we saw one that looked a little bit like Snoopy). They are constructed of some very realistic fog, and going through them does actually hide your plane from view until it emerges the other side. Okay, that doesn't sound overly exciting, but it's the little details like this that are going to be driving progression in this next generation - we're looking for seamless words, with no more of the immovable objects, invisible walls and non-interactive clouds of the PlayStation 2 generation.

Speaking of seamless words, it seems that WarHawk will leave behind the traditional mission-based structure of action games in order to present what the developers are calling an 'open world'. The ongoing conflict that we mentioned is a key part of this - wherever you go, you'll be able to find a fight. It's not clear whether you'll be able to fly around the world entirely at will, choosing any mission that you come across, or if there will be a series of missions from which you can deviate should you so wish. It's also possible

that the 'open world' will work on a district basis, allowing you access to certain areas and letting you go further as you progress, but we prefer the idea of open aerial warfare that lets us fly around, participating and observing as we choose.

Crucially, though, WarHawk will not be entirely based upon aircraft fighting. That first trailer, which showed little more than a shot of a soldier on the ground and a shot of hundreds of planes in the sky, contained a crucial nugget of information: there is also on-foot combat in WarHawk, as has since been confirmed by Incognito. Details are scarce, but it seems you'll be able to land your plane in order to take part in ground battles on foot or in a tank or jeep. This could provide for some fascinating tactics, especially in multi-player - if there was an anti-air vehicle or stationary gun at some obscure point on the map, you could switch to hover mode, perform a vertical landing, leap out and start shooting down planes from the air, but at the risk of being a stationary and weak

target for everyone else playing. It is, of course, entirely possible that there will just be specific missions involving ground combat as opposed to it being a continual possibility, but the 'open world' concept would appear to lend itself more to being able to get out of your plane whenever you felt it would be advantageous as opposed to only when the game tells you to.

Multi-player is a significant part of Incognito's plans for the series. At the moment they've managed to fit 34 players into a multi-player scenario, although the team is keen to just keep throwing players in until it reaches an absolute limit, so it's probable that the final figure will be higher than that. It seeks to present an open, sandbox-style battlefield with jeeps and tanks and other on-foot options lying around the levels as well as the air combat jets. We're hoping for the sort of open combat that means you'll have to hide your plane well if you decide to go it on-foot, as it could still be destroyed by another player whilst you're away, and indeed it seems that that's the sort of creative scenario that Incognito is trying to facilitate in the multi-player environment. The online functionality will be pretty superb, allowing up to three other players to jump in whilst you're playing a match on your console, sign in with their own profiles and join the in-progress match whilst sitting right next to you. There are also big plans for downloadable content inclusion - new maps, planes and vehicles will be available after the game's launch as the developer creates them, although not free of charge. Considering that the PlayStation 3 won't charge you to play online, though, unlike certain other 'next-gen' consoles, this seems entirely fair to us. It seems that content will come in bundles, with new maps coming with multi-player missions scripted to that map along with vehicles specifically useful to it. Co-operative multi-player of some sort seems likely, given that the game is all about massive numbers of planes in the air at one time, but nothing of the sort has yet been confirmed.

WarHawk was bound to be exciting because it will be one of the first PlayStation 3 games available, but like its predecessor, it's also exciting for what it is - a freeform, visually incredible aerial combat game with a control system that makes mid-air acrobatics as simple and intuitive as tilting a controller. The possibility of an open, sandbox style persistent warground with hundreds upon hundreds of combatants and on-ground as well as mid-air combat is tantalising, and it's pretty sure to become an online classic as soon as it's released. This is a sure-fire hit videogame, and you can quote us on that.

ABOUT WARHAWK: A TRUE OPEN WORLD WOULD REALISE OUR HOPES FOR NEXT-GEN GAMEPLAY

%complete

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

PS3 Publisher//Atari Developer//Eden Studios Genre//Survival Horror Players//1 Release Date//TBA

PREVIEW ▽ WARRIORS // ALONE IN THE DARK: NEAR DEATH INVESTIGATION // CALL OF DUTY 3.0

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IT'S safe to say that *Resident Evil* cornered the market for survival horror. It's the most memorable of all the games that can be classed in that genre; the *Silent Hill* and *Project Zero* series are also worthy additions, but for the sudden shocks and general feeling of unease *Resident Evil* is the most fondly remembered. As the series went on however it focused more on action and when *Resi 4* arrived it turned out to be a shoot-'em-up rather than an all-out scare-fest. Not that it's not an amazing game, but how often were you frightened by the events? Not often enough, in fact we spent most of the time grinning and smiling because, while it isn't necessarily jump-out-of-your-seat scary, it is a damn fine game. But in this time with the next-generation of videogaming imminent we're looking to the series that started it all for heart pounding terror, queasy feelings in the pit of our stomachs and the unimaginable fear of turning a corner just in case a being capable of inflicting an incredibly painful death is waiting there to rip your face off. And all you've got to defend yourself is a torch.

The Alone In The Dark games have touched on many themes before,

*Edward Carnby is
alive and well on the PS3*

Alone In The Dark: Near Death Investigation

*We are looking to the series that
started it all for heart pounding
terror and unimaginable fear*

CONTINUATION//

from the zombies, pirates, zombie pirates and zombie cowboys of the PC games to the inter-dimensional, silicone-based, light-fearing creatures of darkness crossing over to our world from the aptly named World of Darkness in *The New Nightmare*. *Near Death Investigation* doesn't go down those ridiculous and sci-fi influenced roads and concerns itself with the greatest of human fears – death and what happens when you die. It's something that the series' main character should be interested in, considering that *Near Death Investigation* is set in the present day while the first game was set in 1926, yet here's Edward Carnby looking younger than he should be and a lot less ginger than before.

The game begins with Carnby being held prisoner; he's strapped to a chair and can only make out blurry outlines of whoever is standing in front of him. This section is played out in a first-person perspective immersing you in Carnby's world and psyche. While it is basically a cutscene there is a little interactivity in that you can close Carnby's eyes, but the guards watching over you don't like this and start shouting and slapping Carnby in order to rouse him. After this violent awakening the guards drag Edward to his feet and they escort him down a dark corridor to who knows where. You're not given a chance to find out as all of a sudden the building starts to explode.

There is an unseen force destroying the building. Cracks start appearing in the walls, and as Carnby turns around he can see one of his captors being dragged into the walls! Just then a gas-line explodes and the building is set on fire, the floor collapses and Carnby falls down through the flaming building only to find himself trapped in a boiler room lined with pipes. Everything burns at a realistic rate thanks to some fancy fire-physics and it's here you take proper control of our strange hero. As the game switches to the familiar third-person perspective we get our first proper look at Edward Carnby. He's dishevelled certainly, but who wouldn't be after what's just happened, his clothing is ripped, there are cuts and bruises on his face but he doesn't look like he'll be getting a free bus pass anytime soon.

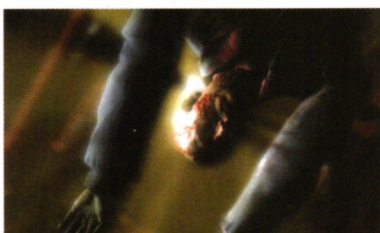
How is this possible? How can someone who should be nearly 100 years old be running around and looking like he's in his late twenties/early thirties? (The lack of ginger hair can be easily explained away by advances in hair dye.) Atari has promised there is an intriguing twist to Carnby's Dr

Who-like regeneration but so far it remains a mystery.

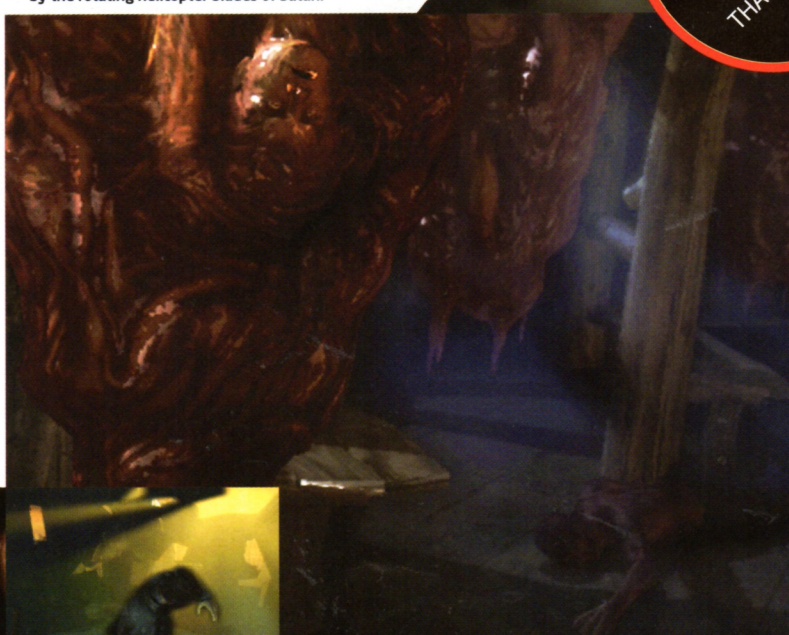
What isn't a mystery is that Edward has to get out of this building. As the fire rages on, and it really is very pretty fire as it dances and engulfs its surroundings enticing you with its flaming fingers... sorry we'd best get a move on rather than concentrating on this 'fire porn', Edward dashes from one room to the next looking for the way out. As he leaves one room the ceiling collapses and buys him a bit of time to clamber over the rubble. Just as he thinks he has time to breathe the whole front of the building collapses and

it's revealed that he is still several stories up. Rubble falls down around him and after Edward just manages to grab hold of a gargoyle to save himself he watches chunks of the building fall down before falling out of sight. As Edward looks around you can see that the building reaches up to the sky but you can only make out as much as normal human eye-sight allows. It's a simple effect but the blurring makes you feel that bit more involved in the character rather than being able to see for miles through some perfect draw-distance game mechanics. Looking out from the building Edward can see the sun setting over Central Park and it's here where much of the game will take place.

This spectacularly dynamic opening marks *Near Death Investigation* out to be not just another survival horror clone and the sheer size of Central Park gives it such an open playing field to create some intense action and scares. Central Park



✖ Yeah, she'd better duck before her head gets sliced off by the rotating helicopter blades of Satan!



ABOUT ALONE IN THE DARK:
A REINVENTION OF THE GAME THAT INVENTED SURVIVAL HORROR

✖ Just what do you do when you're facing that!? We're not too sure at the moment, so let's try ignoring it, it might just go away.



Alone In The Dark: Near Death Investigation



You can only make out as much as human eye-sight allows



Best left alone

Uwe no, don't even think about watching this

The film of *Alone In The Dark* was directed by Uwe Boll and even though it had a slightly impressive cast, including Christian Slater and *American Pie*'s Tara Reid, it is an absolute abomination of a film. It's not even amazingly bad like Boll's previous effort based on the Sega game *House Of The Dead* which bizarrely featured footage spliced into the film, sword fighting zombies and possibly one of the best lines in film ever (if you've seen it you know what line we're on about). In the film, loosely based on *Alone In The Dark 3*, Slater plays Edward Carnby investigating the death of a friend which brings him face to face with the Abskani and while he's battling for his very sanity, so are the viewers. Hardly any of it makes sense and there isn't much coalition with the game, Tara Reid doesn't even get her implanted baps out, which might have been it's only saving grace. It is currently number 28 on the Internet Movie Database's (imdb.com) Worst Films Of All Time list. Wonder if it'll come out on Blu-ray?



☠ Ouch. There's a trail of death and destroyed heads on Edward's quest to stop evil.



ALONE IN THE DARK HISTORY



Still in the dark?

See if any of these sparks a hideous childhood memory...

Alone In the Dark (1992 PC, 1994 3DO)

One of the first survival horror games and also one of the first to use polygons instead of sprites, *Alone In The Dark* saw you playing a ginger version of Edward Carnby investigating the apparent suicide of Jeremy Hartwood the owner of the Decreto mansion. Carnby must use his wits rather than weapons to solve puzzles and evade monsters in this H P Lovecraft-inspired adventure.

Alone In The Dark 2 (1994 PC, 1996 PSOne)

A festive fright this time, set during Christmas, as Edward Carnby and Ted Striker investigate the kidnapping of Grace Saunders. Players got to play as both Edward and Grace, with Grace's sections being stealth orientated as opposed to Edward's action based sections. It was less about the supernatural and more about pirates (no ninjas, boo) as Eddie again must survive in One-Eyed Jack's mansion called Hell's Kitchen.

Alone In The Dark 3 (1995 PC)

Edward travels to an old west ghost town called Slaughter Gluch to investigate the disappearance of a film crew. He learns that the town is cursed and a bad-ass cowboy called Jed Stone is responsible. There was a nice balance between the puzzle solving and all out gun-slingers with zombie cowboys but it was more linear than the first two games, but it did give you the chance to play as a mountain lion after Edward gets transformed into one.

Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare (2001 PSOne, PS2)

From the start you could choose to play as either Edward or Aline Cedrac, a young female adventurer also investigating the secrets of Shadow Island. Edward's adventure was more based around shooting monsters with a triple-barrelled shotgun, while Aline had to scare the light-sensitive monsters away with a torch. *The New Nightmare* totally redesigned Edward's persona.





✗ Best game intro ever? *Alone In The Dark* begins with our hero trying to escape a falling building.

CONTINUATION //

isn't just a great big field, if you've ever been there then you'll know about how the park is littered with statues, basketball courts, restaurants, gardens and there's even a castle there. It's a tourist trap during the day certainly but when the sun goes down and shadows start forming strange shapes it really can get to your as you imagination takes hold and everything becomes very sinister. It's the perfect setting for some pant soiling moments and scares aplenty. The park in *Alone In The Dark* has been recreated

faithfully to it's real life counter-part, including the sewer system underneath the park.

Also since the surrounding area of New York City seems to have been destroyed in a rather apocalyptic manner it's safe to assume that you be calling it home for a while. Because the park is just so damn big another element to facilitate getting about has been introduced: vehicles.

Transport in the survival horror genre has been scarce but in *Near Death Investigation* Edward will be able to jump into cars to cut down the time he'll take to walk from one end of the park to another. It's not just as simple as pressing **A** and roaring off as you would in *GTA*, in fact it's quite a bit more complicated. In one early section Edward has to steal a car in order to escape from yet another building; this one's not burning down though. After getting into the car the view switches to the interior and you can look around, open the glove compartment and check if the previous owner has left any travel sweets. You can also play with the radio to tune into police reports and other emergency frequencies. You don't have to stay in the driver's seat either as the game lets you jump into the back seats and this may come into play when you need a better vantage point for gunning down enemies – we're assuming that at some point Edward will meet some other people and they'll drive while he shoots at chasing monsters. Back in the front and there's one more thing stopping Edward from starting the car – no keys. But Eddie's

"Central Park has been recreated faithfully to it's real life counter-part, including the sewer system underneath the park"



✗ The fire effects are pretty amazing and will ignite the pyromaniac in us all.



✗ We're just praying that the monster designers stay away from the usual horror fare. Oh, wait, too late.

ABOUT ALONE IN THE DARK:
IT OWES A LOT TO RESIDENT EVIL 4 BUT ADDS PLENTY OF ITS OWN IDEAS

Central Perk?

Edward has no friends, just fiends

Alone In The Dark takes place in Central Park in New York. Usually it's a pretty scary place to be in at night what with all the muggers, rapists and thieves operating in it at one time, now it's pretty safe for OAPs mainly thanks to the efforts of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to reduce street crime. The park itself stretches to 843 acres and is roughly twice the size of the Vatican City, this means there is a hell of a lot of space for Edward to go wandering about in, and a hell of a lot of space for monsters and demons to be lurking. Not only that but with many of the landmarks and statues being recreated, it should provide a suitably scary real-world experience for those who have jogged around the park or played some hacky-sack there.

Once you are outside you can roam the paths of the park at your will

Alone In The Dark: Near Death Investigation

Big coat, massive pockets Dig deep to find all sorts of useful items

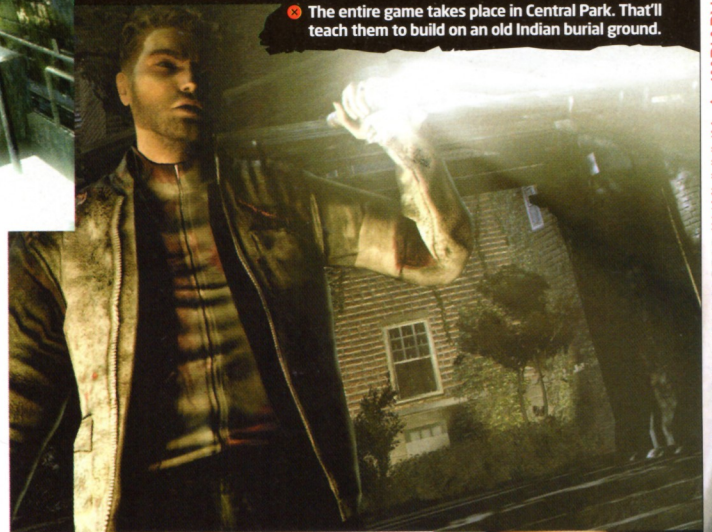
Edward Carnby, fashionable demon hunter about town that he is, wears a large leather coat but it's more than just fashion statement as it houses all the things Eddie needs to take on whatever is thrown at him. The interesting, and slightly scary, thing is that whenever he needs to grab something from his pockets he has to actually look down at the coat's inside pockets and get it out. So rather than having you pause the game and flip through an inventory menu you'll be frantically searching his pockets for a gun or other weapons when you're suddenly attacked, possibly fumbling too much and you'll end up trying to beat a demon to death with a torch. It's simple stuff like this that will help ramp up the tension more than, say, *Resident Evil's* rather relaxed way of equipping fire-arms.

✗ There's no pause screen when you change weapons, so you'll have to watch out for attack.

✗ The entire game takes place in Central Park. That'll teach them to build on an old Indian burial ground.

a resourceful chap, he can hot wire the car. It's not an automatic process and is actually a little mini-game as you have to line up the correct wires with Edward's shaking hands. Cock it up and it could set off the car's alarm giving away your location and attracting any nearby enemies who are only too eager to cut up Edward's face some more.

So far it hasn't been revealed how resistant to attack Edward Carnby is and *Near Death Investigation* doesn't have any health bars or a HUD to indicate how well he's doing or what ammo he has left, but we do know that he'll only be able to carry a reasonable amount of items and weapons at any one time – there's no pulling a rocket launcher from his coat scenarios here. But it does seem as though Edward will have to rely on the environment for makeshift weapons and escape routes from the enemies. Thankfully the power of the PS3 will be able to make the backgrounds fully interactive and give you lots of possible ways to get revenge on the monsters and their razor-sharp claws.



Once you're outside again you can roam the paths of the park at your will and this introduces some interesting new aspects to the survival horror genre, namely a GTA style go anywhere, do anything element. Although you won't have access to all the buildings and certain parts of the park, in order to drive the plot forward, there will be non-essential side-missions and extra quests to where you have to rescue survivors or eliminate monsters from the park. While this gives you a certain amount of freedom to do what you want it won't be the main focus of the game but at least it brings something new to the usual linear progression in most survival horror games. In fact there's something even more special going on with the main plot.

One thing *Resident Evil 4* is criticised for is the last third of the game and the pacing. After you get past the monks and end up in the laboratory it runs out of steam and seems like a bit of a slog to the end. It's difficult to keep up the narrative intensity when you've got a game that lasts for many hours as there will always be some dull sections where your attention will wander and it becomes a rather boring chore to complete these bits until you get to the next point of interest.

Eden Games has taken note of this and rather than *Near Death Investigation* being a massive sprawl from Edward Carnby's escape from the burning building at the start to the eventual conclusion, the game will be broken up into episodes. This seems to make it more like a television series such as *24* or *Lost* where there is intense action for 30 to 40 minutes before it concludes. This will make it more accessible to play as you can sit down for a shorter period of time and really enjoy the intensity of the plot and the character development. It's a brilliant idea and if each episode ends with a cliff-hanger like how the television shows mentioned above do then

it will leave you wanting more because you'll really want to know what happens next.

Another thing this episodic structure will bring to the game is the possibility of extra downloadable content. It's something that Xbox 360 gamers have been enjoying for a while now and it really adds extra dimensions to the game you've just bought. While most downloadable content is used for new levels or maps (and sometimes even patches to fix elements in the game or make them more balanced) *Alone In The Dark* could offer new episodes, with a new one every few months containing a "Previously on *Alone In The Dark*..." and a teaser trailer for the next available download.

As you can see from these screen shots the graphics are stupendous. From the awesome fire effects to the slimy salivating creatures *Near Death Investigation* seems to be pushing huge amounts of polygons to create one of the best looking games on the PS3. And since all the cutscenes use the in-game engine it should blend seamlessly from cutscene to actually playing, hopefully with no load times in between. It may be hell on earth for Edward Carnby but it's going to be heavenly for all of us to play it... from behind the sofa, with the lights on.



✗ As he gets into more scrapes Eddie's precious face gets more battered and dishevelled.

%complete



PS3 Publisher//Activision Developer//Treyarch Genre//FPS Players//1 (20 Online) Release Date//November

PREVIEW: ▽ ALONE IN THE DARK // **CALL OF DUTY 3** // SINGSTAR ▽

Call Of Duty 3

If you can find them, maybe you can hire the 'eh' team...

DESPITE a well-documented wrist slapping over the use of non-game footage to advertise the last *Call Of Duty*, Activision certainly shouldn't have to worry about a repeat performance this time, because the third instalment of its war shooter is looking picture perfect. Focusing on the WWII campaign, Normandy Breakout, *COD3* recounts the story of the Allies' push inland to liberate Paris after D-Day. Okay, so it's another shooty shooty scenario – no surprises there – but what might raise a few eyebrows is the fact that you may not get to play as Americans. We know, shocking isn't it? Especially since they won the war single-handedly and all that. If speculation (and our good friend Wikipedia) is to be believed, Normandy Breakout mainly

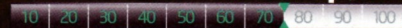
involved English, Canadian and Polish allied fighters – all of which are playable forces in *COD3*.

As is to be expected, significant improvements have been made over *COD2* including a bounty of environment enhancements, some nifty smoke effects where bullets pierce through it, and vehicles that you can actually tear around in and are not fixed to pre-determined routes. Perhaps the most interesting new feature, and one that was obviously designed to incorporate the tilt controller of Wii and hopefully PS3, is the hand-to-hand combat battling where you have to mash the buttons and shake the controller to fight off German soldiers. Some online details have also been

unearthed and since we're soon to be joining the ranks of the beard-fluffing online community it's best that we let you know that *COD3* supports over 20 players online as opposed to *COD2*'s eight... Aw3som3.

Nevertheless all these new elements haven't usurped the more traditional aspects of the game as battle chatter remains, grenades are still in there, it's still bastard hard and it's going to be more linear. Whether all this makes for a better war experience is undecided, but with the previous iteration snagging a Game Of The Year award, *Call Of Duty 3* certainly isn't a title to be 'dismissed'.

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ABOUT CALL
OF DUTY 3:
SPECTACULAR
ON-RAILS
FPS THAT'LL
LEAVE YOU
SHELLSHOCKED

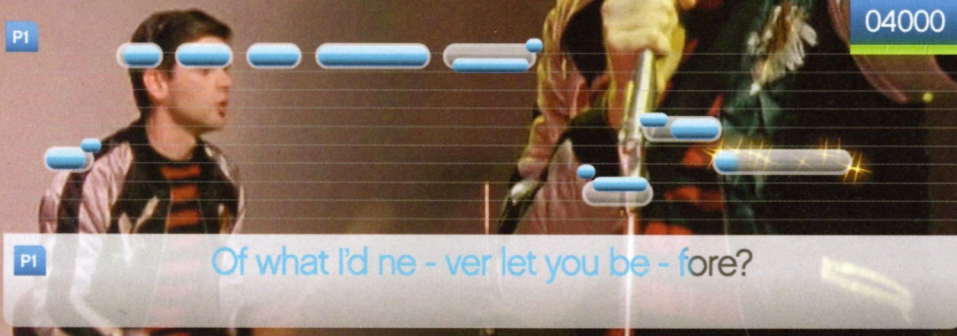


PREVIEW: ▽ ALONE IN THE DARK // **CALL OF DUTY 3** // SINGSTAR ▴

PS3 Publisher//Sega Developer//Sony London Genre//Party Players//1-8 Release Date//TBC

Tonight Matthew, I'm going to be...

Singstar



Rockin' da mic

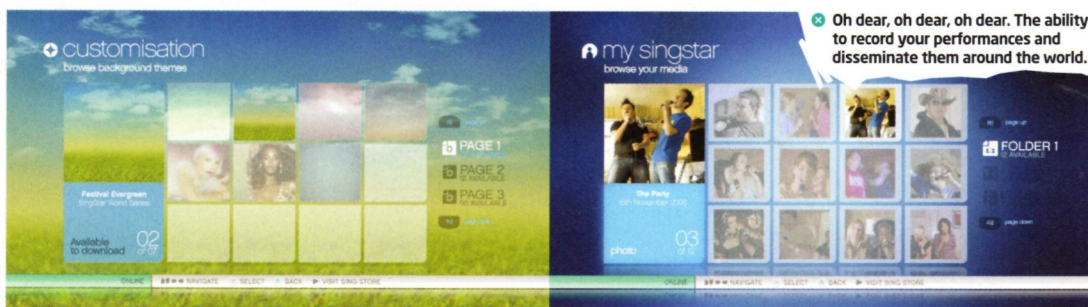
Sony offering up its media bank? Whatever next?

As well as the online community that My Singstar offers, allowing wannabe pop bitches to share their Eyetoy shots, videos and scores, and the ability to download tunes from the gargantuan Sony media library, there's a few more superfluities that the *Singstar* aficionado will no doubt love. The new silver mics, for example, may seem like a cynical attempt to rinse the gaming public out of more cash, but we're sure that there will be plenty of warblers out there jumping for joy at the prospect of looking even more ridiculous after kicking out time. With PSP connectivity,

enabling the transfer of all your performances, a stylish new look and an alert system warning you of newly available tracks and suggesting tunes based on your selections, *Singstar* looks to be less of a game and more of a karaoke training centre.

ABOUT SINGSTAR: GET DRUNK, DO SOME SINGING, POST IT ON THE INTERNET, LOSE YOUR DIGNITY

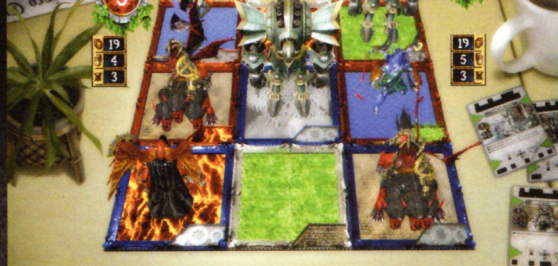
IT'S PAST three in the morning, and you're lolling home like a kebab-laden buoy in a squall. Your brain vomits ideas into your skull – phone an ex girlfriend, steal a supermarket trolley, or go skinnydipping. All tremendous proposals, and perfect post pub activities, but these actions rarely carry any kind of sense into the first rays of morning. *Singstar*, a relatively new addition to this array of drunken pursuits, is looking to make something of a scene when it hits the PS3, with a monstrous collections of additions and extras compared to any previous version. As the first title to truly delve into the vast base of tunes offered by the PS3, it looks like this *Singstar* is the only karaoke title you'll need. Coming with over 300 tunes already packed into the game (that's every song in all the PS2 games assembled on one Blu-Ray), and the ability to download others in the Sony stable right from day one, music fans will be in their element with a hugely customisable playlist. Also new, and impressive is that in conjunction with Sony's Eyetoy the system enables online sharing of photos and videos. Imagine how silly you could



get with that. Now we're all for freedom of expression, especially when that expression comes from a quartet of drunk Swedish girls, but we imagine the Sony moderators will have their work cut out removing any lewd content; indeed, as soon as we get our hands on it we'll be investigating just how much lewdness the PS3 can take.

%complete





✦ This revolutionary new camera dimension takes collectable card battles in a totally new direction, but will it also open up other possibilities in other genres?



It's Judgement Day, d'ya wanna play cards?

PS3 Developer//Sony Japan Release Date//TBA
Website//www.eu.playstation.com/ps3/

The Eye Of Judgement

LISTEN UP, KIDS. It's not often we get introduced to a whole brand new genre, but you can most certainly say that *The Eye Of Judgement* classes as an entirely new brand of videogame. Stay with us here, as you're probably going to have a little difficulty taking this one in.

Think EyeToy. Then, keeping that thought in your head, conjure up the idea of a tabletop

card battling game. Now shake your head a little until that messy amalgamation of concepts looks a little like these screenshots. You now have a rough approximation of *The Eye Of Judgement*. Created by Richard Marx the mind behind the EyeToy, this bizarre game actually plays surprisingly well. The unique camera is used, not only to detect the amount and type of cards and transfer them



to the screen – via the natty titled cybercode – but also to detect the movement of your fingers as you send orders through to your PS3. Not a DualShake in sight. Coming with 30 cards to start with, building up to over a hundred, there is some concern about the lack of variety when stacked up against the likes of *Magic: The Gathering* or *Pokémon*. That said, this is surely an opportunity for Sony to capitalise on the collection fever that pervades such games. "Got... need... got, got, got... need."



PS3 Developer//Codemasters Release Date//2007 Website//www.codemasters.co.uk



Look, a Colin McRae preview without a 'Rally good, joke

JUST HOW EVOLVED can videogames get? Pretty much every title in pretty much every series puffs itself up on the premise that it's a 'true evolution of the franchise or genre'. A huge majority of the time this turns out to be the kind of unashamed marketing drivel that could easily be confused with lies. Understandably then, when we see those particular words in that particular order crop up in a press release it puts us all a little bit on edge.

Codemasters' executive producer Gavin Raeburn has managed to inflame our wariness gland by confidently stating that "The all-new *Colin McRae Rally* will be a real evolution for the series". Hmm. It matters little in full fairness, as this new iteration of

Colin McRae: DIRT

Codemasters' rally hit, if it retains the quality of the series, is likely to put many other racers to shame. So what exactly does this 'real evolution' consist of? We've been told that as well as the stunning visuals expected of any PS3 title, there are a whole new batch of off-road events like the hill climb and rally cross. Like we said, evolution or no, with Codemasters' ethos of making titles high in both fun and accessibility, we're sure this'll be the game you expect it to be.



✦ Getting down and dirty with McRae's first foray onto the next-generation platform of choice may put other racers to shame.

ABOUT
NBA LIVE
07: ANOTHER
SPORTS
FRANCHISE
BUT THIS TIME
WITH NEXT-GEN
VISUALS!

PS3 Developer//EA Release Date//TBA
Website//www.easports.com/nbalive07/

NBA Live 07

Live and kicking on the PS3

"WE WISH WE were a little bit taller, wish we were 'ballers, wish we had the girls with the big avocados." We're not entirely sure how that song goes, as you've probably guessed, but the sentiment's there: videogame journalism isn't nearly as fun as playing basketball. Indeed, looking at the glut of games touting themselves as an accurate description of b-ball life, we're a little jealous if truth be told.

Good for us then, that EA's *NBA Live* is coming to PS3 – at least then we can pretend. New this time around are some of the most astonishing character models and animation you've ever seen. With a revolutionary new momentum system and procedural awareness technology giving us, without a doubt, the most realistic visuals in gaming. Now look at these screens and marvel while we pop out for a sex doll and a brace of avocados.



PS3 Developer//Omega Force Release Date//November Website//www.koei.co.uk

Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War

Pack up the picnic, there's a storm coming...

Charge! They may be running out of the screen at you, but will Omega Force come good?

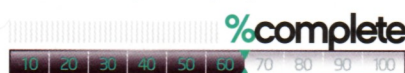


GIVEN KOEI'S FIRST

miserable attempt at next-gen gaming, with *Dynasty Warriors 5*, we weren't all that energised with the prospect of another in the *Romance Of The Three Kingdoms* saga. Indeed, things got worse when we got a look at some early screens of the in-game footage. It's all very well to create sumptuous demos and trailers, then deliver something that, at first glance at least, looks proper crap – as *Dynasty Warriors* creator Omega Force did.

We're being unfair here, because despite Omega Force's

involvement this is a completely new venture for Koei having nothing to do with either of its two biggest successes, namely *Dynasty Warriors* and *Kessen*. No, *Bladestorm* is being built from scratch, and still has a good deal of development time left in the schedule. We're hopeful, as Koei has promised that award-winning dev team Omega Force will deliver the goods, but we're not holding our breath. Not for a hundred years anyway.



PS3 Developer//SOE Release Date//November
Website//www.darkkingdom.station.sony.com

Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom

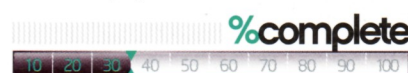
Someone want to put the light on?

WE'RE NOT GREEDY

folk, but when we get hold of one of Sony Online Entertainment's action RPG titles we turn into the most grasping, mercenary killers on the face of the planet. It's bad enough on the PlayStation 2, just imagine how enormous the PS3 iteration will be. We're gonna need therapy.

In all honesty, we haven't been able to work out exactly what makes this a truly next-gen title, indeed the only addition seems to be the ability to smash through scenery,

but if you're into the avariciousness that the likes of *Baldur's Gate* and *Untold Legends* imbue you with, a simple hike in the graphical quality will be more than enough to keep you satisfied. Famed for its technical proficiency, expect SOE to be leading the pack in terms of sheer visual luxuriousness, not to mention what's guaranteed to be an involving online multi-player mode.



PS3 Publisher//Sony Developer//Sony London Genre//Shooter Players//TBA Release Date//TBA 2007

Eight Days

A week and a day of hardcore gunplay



Razing Arizona

Techno, techno, techno, techno...

Eight Days undoubtedly delves into the bowels of the PS3 in terms of technology, as anyone who's seen the PS3 technical demonstrations from the game will testify. Two of the most impressive sequences offered to showcase the PS3's power were taken from *Eight Days*, the first an exploding gas station, and the second a rather sexy motor being shot to ribbons, deforming in real time as bullet after bullet ripped through the vehicle's chassis with unbelievable realism. So far it's this kind of jaw-dropping spectacle that's enthused us, rather than any genuine innovation in the gameplay or a particularly thrilling storyline.



❖ Hide and seek was never a fun game with these lot



❖ What a horrible waste of human life. Not to mention a lovely motor

IT'S DIFFICULT

when you come up against the likes of *Eight Days*, especially when the full capabilities of the PS3 are pretty much unknown. Loaded down with the kind of outrageous gun battles and acrobatic flair usually associated with a John Woo flick – but by wide consensus looking too good to be true – *Eight Days* is one of those dubious creatures that we just don't know what to make of. If you've seen the footage you'll be well aware of what we're talking about. Silky smooth, lavish visuals, oodles of style and seamless action featuring what, if it turns out to be anything like we've been lead to believe, is exactly the kind of thing that displays wonderfully the hike in potential between the PS3 and anything else out there.

Touted as a 'crime epic', and charting the fortunes of a band of desert-based criminals as they ply their dirty trade in the dusty Arizona wilderness, *Eight Days* looks to take influence from both *The Getaway* and *Pursuit Force*, and with information being fairly scant at the

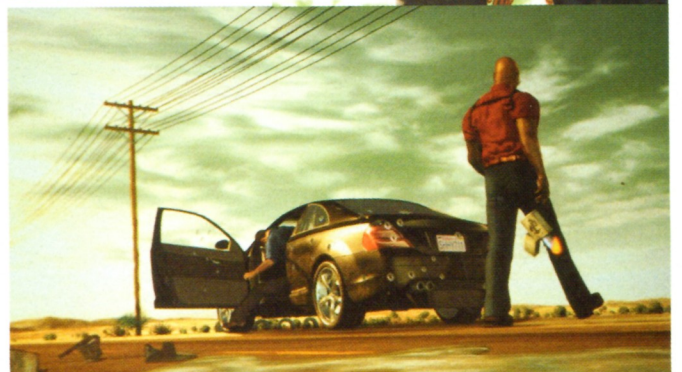
ABOUT EIGHT DAYS: LOCK STOCK MEETS THE GETAWAY FOR A DESERT RENDEZVOUS

moment it's difficult to make anything but the snappiest of judgments as yet.

Apologies for sitting on the fence with this one, but our innate trust in human beings has been shaken somewhat with numerous titles

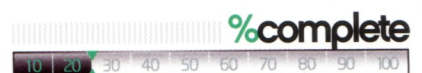
over the years. *Eight Days* is an exciting prospect, there's little doubt about that, but much of that enthusiasm stems from footage that our gut tells us has seen more touching up than that easy girl at your school disco.

In reality, being cynical gits, we're expecting less of *Eight Days* than many other folk, but that's not to say we won't be perfectly happy to chow down on some humble pie when it finally hits the shelves.



❖ The machine gun race was never a popular event, just look at their faces

❖ Self-consciously cool gangster flicks are awesome, right?





Destruction Derby

Why stick to the course when you can make your own?

Of course, there's more to *Battlelines* than just vehicular combat with 'intentional destruction of the environment' being touted as an integral part of the gameplay. This refers to the ability to strategically destroy the environment in order to change track conditions or create new paths. Can't out race or out gun your opponents? That doesn't matter, just blast your way through a building and make yourself a crafty short cut. With any luck the resulting damage will also act as a weapon, crushing the no-hopers buzzing around you.



Full Automatic For The People

Full Auto 2: Battlelines

ANYONE WHO HAS played the original *Full Auto* game will be able to confirm that there's not a great deal of depth in there. You like to race fast cars? Yup. You get a strange tingling feeling when firing big guns and blowing stuff up? Who doesn't? And you like the whole thing dripping in shiny high-definition visual jiggery-pokery? Abso-bloomin'-lutely. When put together, these elements should make for a balls-out thrill-seeking ride of a videogame that appeals to the lowest common denominator (read *Next3*), but for one reason or another it failed to fire gamers' engines when it appeared on the Xbox 360 several months back. Despite boasting some rather nice features including a handy time reversal option that gave you a second chance at escaping death and the ability to customise almost every single race, bearded Xbox heads preferred the realism and tight racing lines of games like *Project Gotham Racing 3*.

So, with the test-run first game out of the way and lessons learned,



✖ Performing crazy stunts helps to increase your boost meter - this should earn you more boost than Cadburys.

✖ "Burnout meets *Twisted Metal* in the smash-hit racing game of the century!" Expect *Full Auto 2*'s box to say something similar.

development team Pseudo Interactive is looking to bless the PlayStation 3 with a sequel that not only rectifies the foibles inherent in the original game, but also leaves any lingering trace of subtly by the side of the road. For anyone still in the dark about *Full Auto*, the basic premise really couldn't be simpler: take out your opponents and finish first by any means possible. By tricking out a beefy muscle car with machine guns and rocket launchers then exploding your way to the finish line, you can become the Schumacher of the streets and top the podium every time.

Granted, we've all sat in cars and blown things up before - in fact Gillian Taylforth

has made quite a habit of it - but *Full Auto 2: Battlelines* is going to have to offer far more than just your average combat racer. This new material comes in the form of more than 20 customisable weapons, a lengthy Career mode in which you have to conquer different districts, as well as an all-new Arena mode which should be a winner with any online gamers. These extra options do make for a fair old bounty, but will it be enough to turn this thrill-fest of a racing game into an essential next-generation purchase?

%complete



ABOUT FULL AUTO 2: SEQUEL TO THE SLIGHTLY SUCCESSFUL XBOX 360 GAME FULL AUTO





The kind of global warming we like to hear about

PS3 Publisher//TBA Developer//Pandemic Studios Genre//Shooter Players//TBA Release Date//TBA 2007

As with the PlayStation2 game, all vehicles can be stolen, driven and used for destruction.

A more varied battlefield is promised this time with seaborne missions included too.



ABOUT
MERCENARIES 2:
SIMPLE
GRAND THEFT
AUTO MEETS
BATTLEFIELD
MODERN
COMBAT

Mercenaries 2: World In Flames

WOULDN'T THE GAMING

world be a boring place without maniacal despots and wannabe dictators? They're great, giving you cause to kill, demolish and destroy in an effort to depose the buggers. Not only are they invariably evil and corrupt enough for you not to feel any remorse at their untimely demise at your hands, but given their malevolence, anyone working for them must be similarly evil minded. So much so in fact, that they're probably incapable of having a family, again leaving you without any reason not to slaughter them like pigs – I mean you never hear

about the suffering of videogame-goon widows and orphans do you? A great thing for the likes of that crazy Swede Mattias Nilsson, one of the guns for hire in Pandemic Studios' upcoming sequel, *Mercenaries 2: World In Flames*. Not that he'd care either way.

New to this exciting next-gen title are a whole heap of ideas that, due to the limitations of the previous generation of consoles, simply couldn't be implemented in the first game. Players can now swim, dive and commandeer seagoing vehicles, hijack choppers mid flight and use trails

of petrol to blow up buildings, enemies, trees and vehicles. Using the Havok Engine, Pandemic is looking to allow players to interact with every single item in the game world (which is considerably larger than the entirety of the previous *Mercenaries*). Also, with the added grunt of the PS3, *World In Flames* has an intriguing action/reaction mechanic that makes adjustments to the virtual Venezuela depending on how you conduct your business. Also new to the series, and equally interesting, is the ability to set up your own business and hire fellow mercenaries to do your dirty work for you. With a little more fanfare than the previous game enjoyed, *World In Flames* easily makes in into the top echelons of titles we're looking forward to at the moment. This'll blow your mind, along with everything else in the room, if we're any judge of next-gen gaming.

Co-operatives Making friends the mercenary way

An E3 demo did an amazing job of grabbing our interest by displaying the multi-player facet of *World In Flames*, and showing just how very much sand there is in this particular box. Mattias and new merc, Eva, combined their skills to blow the crap out of an oil rig off the coast of Venezuela (The story centres around oil-fuelled civil war, you see.), utilising numerous weapons and vehicles. The highlight was a mid-air chopper-jack using one of the new tools, the grappling hook.



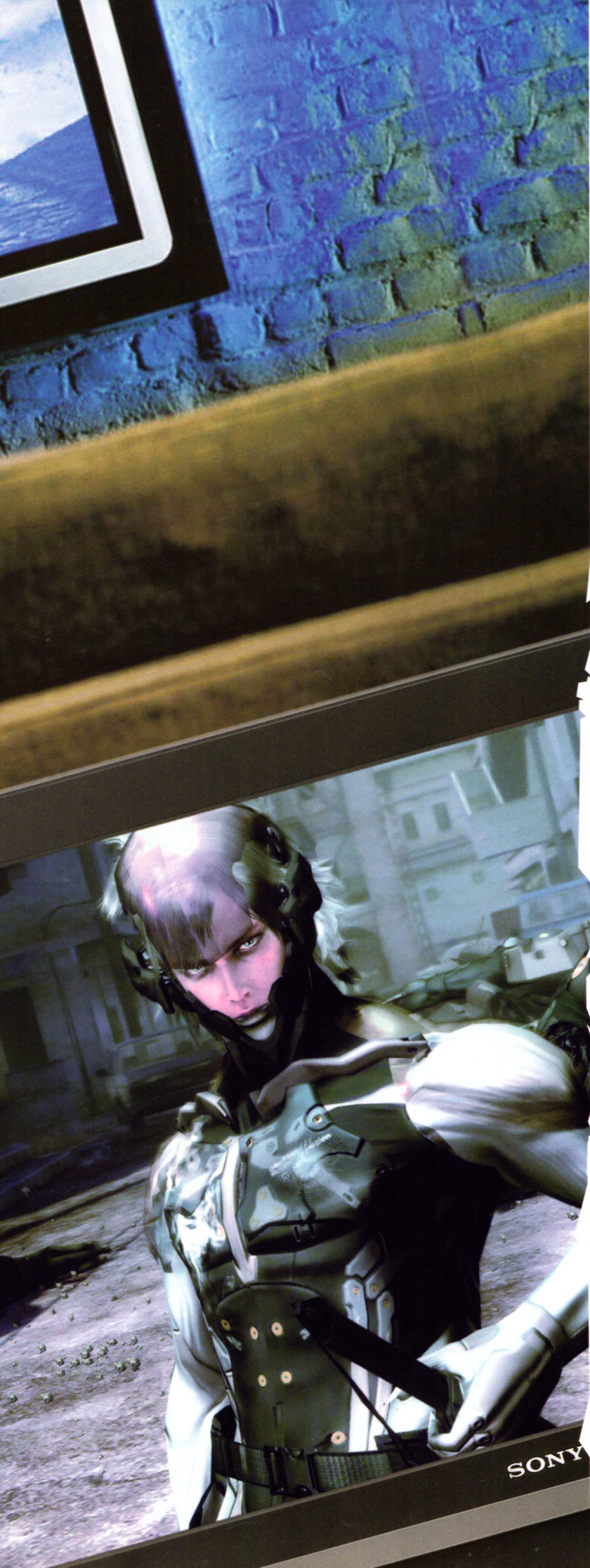
next³feature

Are you HD Ready?

This revolution will be televised

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next
PLAYSTATION



Television is about to get a hell of a lot better. No, we haven't just received a tip-off that EastEnders is finally going to be taken outside and put out of its misery - we are talking about a change of a far more fundamental nature: high definition.

To understand why high definition video (or HD for short) is going to be such a huge deal, it is first helpful to know a bit about what it isn't: standard definition. Standard definition video in the UK (as used by Region 1 DVDs and the programmes we watch on TV every day) consists of a 625-line image, of which 576 are visible on-screen. Each frame of this image is scanned onto our screens in two passes - the odd lines in one, the even lines in another - in a process known as interlaced scanning. 50 of these half-frames are scanned per second, resulting in an overall refresh rate of 25 full frames per second. And to think the hardcore videogaming crowd throw their toys out of the pram when something runs at 30 frames.

HD video comes in several varieties, but the two most common formats are called 720p and 1080i. The numbers refer to the number of visible lines the format supplies, while the letter refers to the method of scanning: 'i' is for 'interlaced', while 'p' stands for progressive. The latter is the choice of champions as it refreshes the entire screen every frame, like a very expensive flick-book. The interlaced method on the other hand generally offers more detail but updates the picture using alternate lines splicing frames together. This can lead to a slight flicker in the image. Which you choose usually comes down to personal preference, but since most HDTV support both methods it's not something you have to worry about.

Either way they both look sweet and both offer a lot more lines than your standard telly. More lines mean more detail, and it is this extra injection of detail, or 'definition', over standard video that is the central selling point of high def; 1080i offers around four times the detail of a standard TV broadcast. Once people have watched an England football match in HD - being able to pick out every blade of grass on the pitch and every bead of sweat on Wayne Rooney's potato-esque head - they'll be queuing up to replace their old standard definition tellyes with brand new 'HD Ready' models.

The PlayStation 3 is the first mass market HD device available for your TV. Your console will be able to play games in 720p 1080i and 1080p. On top of this the PlayStation 3 will be the UK's first Blu-ray player, Blu-ray being Sony's new high definition DVD format, boasting a resolution that's about four times that of regular DVDs. And all this right out of the box, unlike Microsoft's proposed HD-DVD

Getting hold of a screen or projector with HDCP support is absolutely vital if you're serious about watching hi-def material



THE FULL HD MONTY

Why the 1080p dream is out of most people's reach. And why it doesn't matter

As Sony's 'head of everything' Phil Harrison is keen to point out at every opportunity, PlayStation 3 is the only console that supports the HD holy grail resolution of 1080p. 1080p, for the uninitiated, is the highest resolution that current technology can handle - the 1080 is the number of lines of resolution on the TV, the 'p' stands for progressive, so that's 1,080 lines refreshed simultaneously at a frame rate of 60fps. 1080i, on the other hand, provides the same resolution but because it's interlaced (that's the 'i' bit) it refreshes 540 lines alternately, effectively making it half the resolution of 1080p. As a guide, UK PAL TV is 625i and a DVD player with a progressive scan mode runs at 576p.

Anyway, in order to appreciate the glory (and we can vouch for it, we've seen it running) of 1080p you'll need a TV that can display it. Problem is that there's currently only one TV range that can do this - the Sony Bravia X-Series and these cost between £3,000 and £5,000 depending on the size of the screen.

The point about 1080p (and all other HD resolutions, for that matter) is that it enables you to have massive screen sizes without losing resolution. And because 1080p is so good you won't notice the difference between it and 720p, for example, unless you've got a TV that's at least 40" you just won't need to worry about 1080p.



The only PS3 game that currently runs in 1080p is actually not a game. Sony put together *Gran Turismo HD* as a demonstration of what a 1080p game would look like using assets from *Gran Turismo 4*. Still, it looked awesome.

add on for Xbox 360. HD-DVD is a rival high definition DVD format.

Finally, years after it first arrived in Japan, Australia and the USA, a real high definition television service has launched in the UK. Sky subscribers were the first to get the chance to experience HDTV in their homes, with the satellite broadcaster launching its HD package earlier this year, just in time for the start of the World Cup. The service broadcasts in the 1080i format, and currently includes dedicated movie and sports channels with more content later this year. You can also get the BBC's HD trial service too. The newly-merged NTL and Telewest cable companies will begin rolling out their own services this year, while terrestrial providers are likely to end up lagging far, far behind. Although it's still not clear if DVB (the current Freeview format) will have a large enough bandwidth to carry the new HD channels.

Okay, that's the hard sell. Now what about the screen? Several months ago European consumer electronics industry body, EICTA, set out a series of criteria that must be filled before a display device can be given an official 'HD Ready' label. That infamous sticker waiting to be peeled off by some mischievous rascal in Dixons and

stuck to the side of a toaster. The idea was to prevent any confusion that may arise when shopping for a television, flat panel monitor or projector for the purpose of watching HD video. A jargon free guarantee.

The first requirement is that the device must have a native resolution of at least 1280 x 720 pixels (this is a 16:9 widescreen resolution - all HD video is widescreen), ensuring that there is at least one horizontal line for every line in the HD video signal.

Then there are the connections: the device must accept HD via digital DVI or HDMI, in addition to having provision for analogue component video. Appropriately enough, these inputs must also be able to accept the 720p and 1080i video formats, running at both 50 and 60Hz. Which means you don't get any of those region specific problems that dogged old school low definition screens. Finally, any DVI or HDMI connection must support the content protection system known as HDCP.

Getting hold of a screen or projector with HDCP support is absolutely vital if you're serious about watching high definition material. HDCP was created to prevent consumers from hooking HDTV boxes up to their PCs and making pristine copies of shows and movies. Anything that broadcasters and studios want to keep out

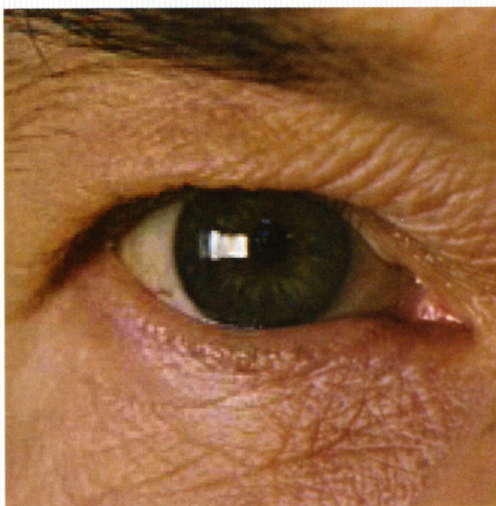




HOORAY FOR BLU-RAY!

Sony's new high definition DVD format is named after the colour of the laser that makes the technology possible. Blue lasers read at a higher wavelength to a standard DVD's red laser and so more data can be stored on a 20cm disc. Anyway, what it offers (the PlayStation 3 will be the UK's first Blu-ray player) is the perfect accompaniment to high definition gaming - high definition movies.

The resolution is about 4 times that of a regular DVD - you can see here in these stills taken from the latest *X-Men* movie that the detail is much, much better. And the cost? Well, Blu-ray discs are currently on sale in the US for around \$30 so expect a UK price point of around £20.



Spot the difference - one side of these grabs is regular DVD resolution, the other's in high resolution.

High-definition isn't just about gaming, it's about football too. Oh, and other TV too.

of the video pirates' grubby mitts will be subject to this protection, and as it cannot be implemented on anything other than a digital connection, it means that most shows and films that appear on the Sky HD service (or at least most of the ones that you will actually want to watch) will only play through a DVI or HDMI connection. Got an 'HD Ready' telly hooked up to your Sky box via an analogue component video connection? Then you're going to be left outside the party, watching films in old-fashioned standard definition while your friends enjoy them in HD. Things will be just as bad if you splash out on a screen that has the required resolution and a DVI input but no HDCP support - any protected content will simply appear as a horrible scrambled mess.

The HD Ready certification isn't perfect (its insistence on provision for analogue component video is pointless), but it has certainly made the process of picking out a suitable display device a lot easier. It's important to remember, though, that the label isn't a seal of quality. It merely confirms that a screen or projector meets the minimum requirements to display HD video. And, if you have ever tried running *Half-Life 2* on a PC you'll know that 'minimum requirement' means last resort.

For example, most HD Ready screens and projectors have the relatively low high def resolutions of 1280 x 720 or 1280 x 768. While these are perfectly suited to displaying 720p material, 1080i stuff has to be slightly downsampled to fit, depriving the viewer of a little of the detail that makes the format so desirable. It's still going to be a far sharper picture than standard definition stuff, of course.

So, now that you know you should be looking for something proudly displaying the HD Ready logo in stark black and white, what are your options? Cathode Ray Tube, Liquid Crystal Display, plasma, rear projection, front projection. For the uninitiated, it can all be a bit confusing. The humble cathode ray tube (CRT) television - the glass-screened behemoth that most of us still have hulking in the corner of our living room - can be discounted off the bat. That's a given. While CRT screens are still capable of producing fantastic pictures (many US HDTV viewers use them), they sadly lack the DVI or HDMI digital video connections necessary for full HD readiness. If you want a large picture

on a not-too-large budget, a rear projection screen is a good bet. As they are largely hollow boxes, they tend to be relatively lightweight, and thankfully they are now a lot less bulky than they were in the past; wall-mounting is still not generally possible, however. The best examples utilise DLP projectors, which are capable of producing superb pictures with high contrast ranges. DLP does have one potentially annoying side effect, however - which we'll come to when we look at projectors in a moment.

The most popular option is likely to be a flat screen television, or LCD and plasma. Plasma was once the swankiest technology on the block, with large screens adorning the walls of the homes of Premiership footballers and D-list celebrities. With LCD being the current flat screen du jour, plasma has fallen on rather hard times of late and is now considered almost a budget option.

The chief drawbacks to plasma technology are burn-in (where the outlines of images remain on the screen) and relatively weak colour reproduction. Neither are huge problems in our opinion, and plasma screens from big name brands



LCD is the best choice for the 'average' viewer encompassing excellently designed screens with classy performance

like Hitachi and Pioneer are more than capable of providing glorious pictures. You just have to accept the fact that ten years down the line you may have to replace. Plasma screens can almost always be wall-mounted, and are available in a wide range of sizes: 42-inch is the most popular, but Samsung has designed a completely unnecessary 102-inch that should go on sale within the next year.

LCD used to be an expensive option and screens were restricted in size. The last 18 months has seen that all change, and while LCD screens are still pricier than their plasma counterparts, large numbers of

✖ Sony's standalone Blu-ray player isn't available in the UK yet - the PlayStation 3 will be the first player launched over here.

good quality screens are now available in HD-suitable 32, 37 and 42-inch sizes. LCD panels don't suffer from burn-in and tend to produce vibrant, vivid colours. As with all technologies, though, there is a drawback.

In LCD's case, this used to be a distracting amount of motion-induced blur, but thankfully many of the better screens have all but eliminated this flaw. LCD is probably the best choice for the 'average' viewer, as it encompasses some excellently designed screens with classy performance. Philips, Samsung and LG are the names to look out for, but there are some good budget models around too.

If nothing less than a massive picture will suffice, a traditional home cinema projector is your best bet. There are plenty of HD Ready models around, although you'll have to pay big bucks for truly great performance. The two most common technologies are LCD and DLP. LCD models tend to be cheaper than DLP ones, and often suffer from the so-called 'chicken-wire' effect - a quirk whereby you can see the gaps around individual pixels on the image. DLP is generally superior and adept at reproducing dark colours convincingly, but it too has its drawbacks. The most noteworthy is the rainbow effect, which creates distracting flickers of bright coloured light in bright areas of the image. Thankfully, many newer DLP projectors remedy this problem, or at least reduce its occurrence.

Whatever you watch it on, HDTV can only be as good as the programmes, videogames and movies it shows. In the case of the PlayStation 3 the first wave of games do a lot to show off the format. Witnessing every PS3 game at this year's E3 running at 1080i was a sight to behold and Sony is keen to stress that the PS3 is the only console that supports the superior (but more costly) 1080p resolution.

It's hard to imagine just how good gaming in high definition is. We can liken it to this - remember how you felt when you watched your first DVD movie? It was the day that VHS died, right? Well, that's what HDTV is like - after experiencing it you won't want to watch standard definition again. It's that simple. What is certain is that with high definition broadcasts and the launch of PlayStation 3 in November, 2006 is the year of HD.

SKY-DEF Scratching your head when it comes to making HD Ready purchases?

The SkyHD box will be the first mainstream HDTV receiver to hit the UK. Offering access to Premiership football matches and an HD version of Sky One, as well as a trial run of the BBC's HD service, the box also features a hard disk recorder that works in the same way as the current Sky+ box. HDCP-protected video will be outputted via HDMI, but the first generation will also sport a component video output for non-protected high definition material.



CREDIT CARD READY!

Scratching your head when it comes to making HD Ready purchases?

Scratching your head when it comes to making HD Ready purchases? Want a future-proof home entertainment set-up, or one that looks as good switched off as it does on? Don't trust the spotty, commission-crazed youths in Dixons? Then peruse our selection of HD displays instead. The prices are based on online stores, which we would always recommend you look at before going down the high street. You may well turn up a cast iron bargain.



LG 26LX2R

£800, uk.lge.com

This stylish LCD television might not be the biggest player on the block - it's only got a 26-inch screen - but its HDMI and DVI connections (yup, it's got both) and 1366 x 768 resolution make it ideal for watching HD video.



SIM2 HTL40

£5,000, www.sim2.co.uk

This LCD display is truly gorgeous, blending metal and wood in a style that befits its Italian roots. It's a top class performer too, its 40-inch screen sporting some fancy Faroudja DCDi video processing technology. It's a touch pricey, however, especially considering it doesn't make any provision for sound.



Sagem Axiom HD-D45

£1,500, www.sagem.co.uk

A 45-inch, DLP-powered rear projection television for £1,500 is not to be sniffed at. The piano black finish makes this one of the best-looking rear pros around, and the picture features excellent black reproduction but none of the major flaws associated with DLP.



BenQ PE7700

£1,600, www.benq.co.uk

Fancy creating a high def viewing room to rival your local Odeon? Well, consider this DLP projector, which can create a 300-inch image and comes with an HDMI input. It delivers a gloriously sharp picture, yet is available online for less than £2,000. That's a bargain in our eyes.



Hitachi 42PD7500

£2,080, www.hitachidigitalmedia.com

This 42-incher represents a good deal at just over two grand. It performs as well as any plasma you'll see, looks elegantly handsome and its built-in Freeview digital tuner means that you'll have a few decent channels to tide you over until HDTV actually shows up.



Philips 42PF9830

£3,300, www.philips.co.uk

This 42-inch LCD is one of the few available that offers a 'true' HD screen capable of displaying ultra-detailed, ultra-smooth 1080p material. And there's plenty besides that, including Philips' clever Ambilight technology, an odd-sounding but effective backlighting system that reduces eyestrain - and looks cool as hell.



Sony Bravia KDL-40V2000U

£1,700, www.amazon.co.uk

We just had to put a Sony TV in here - and this 40-inch LCD screen is Sony's flagship model. Unsurprisingly, it's currently the best that Sony makes and boasts one of the best contrast ratios (so you get more realistic blacks) around at 1300:1. Apart from the excellent build quality you get with a Sony TV, it'll also match your PS3 perfectly.



Samsung Z4 Series

£450, www.currys.co.uk

A steal at this price, this 32-inch CRT HD Ready TV is the best option if you're on a budget. Don't be put off by the 'old' technology of the CRT screen, the picture quality is as good as some of the more expensive LCD screens. The downsides are its weight (it'll take two grown men to lift it) and the amount of space it takes up compared to an LCD screen. Still, at this price you could buy two.

BLU movies

Your next generation movie guide bible

Rating guide

ESSENTIAL
ROCKING
GOOD
BARGAIN BIN
BIN FODDER



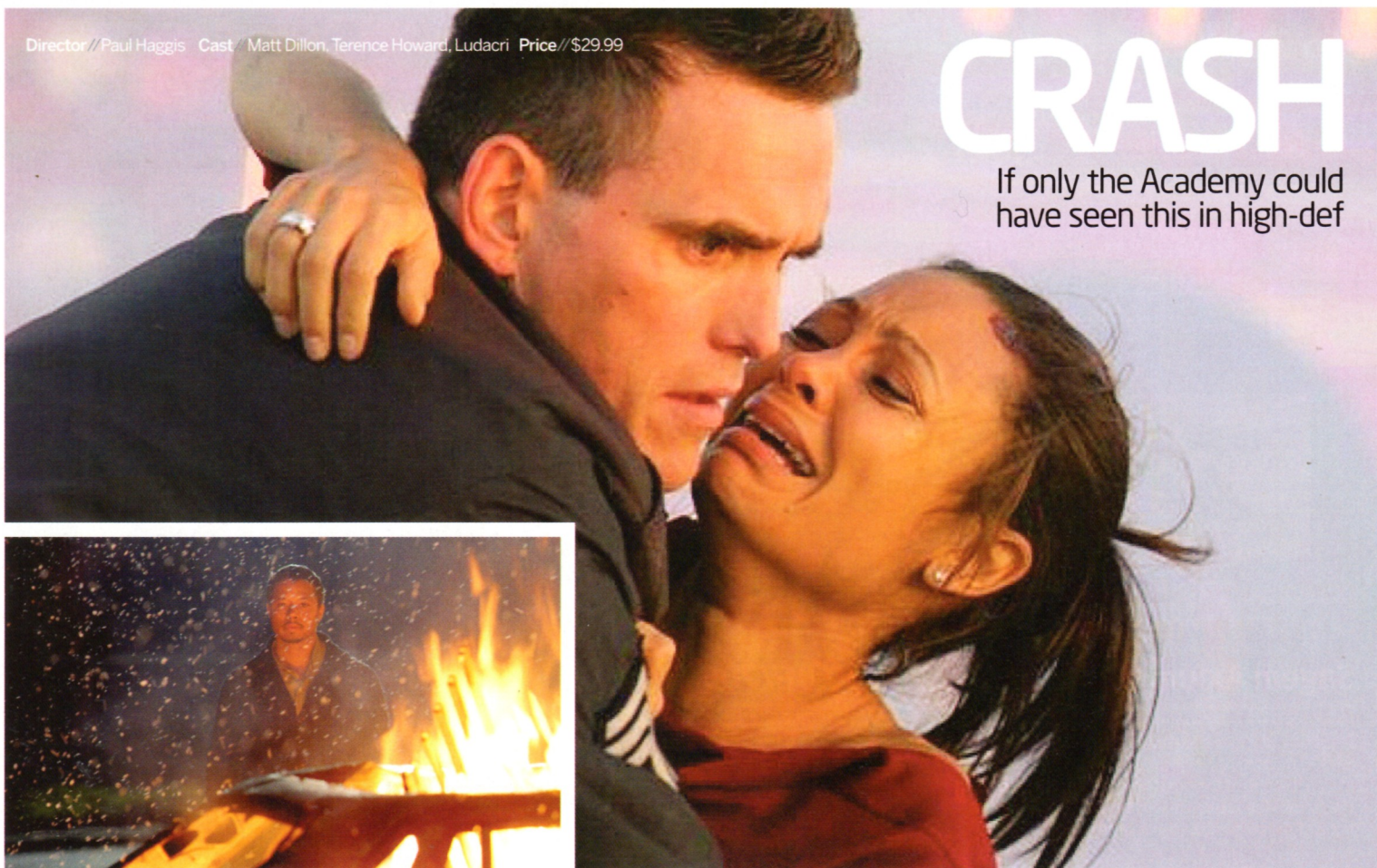
★★★★★
★★★★
★★★
★★
★

REVIEW: BLU MOVIES // NEXT MONTH ▽

Director//Paul Haggis Cast/ Matt Dillon, Terence Howard, Ludacri Price//\$29.99

CRASH

If only the Academy could have seen this in high-def



ABOUT//

Crash is not a tremendously awful film by any stretch of the imagination. It has in it some

truly excellent scenes and is at the very least determined to be a good film. It has, however, received a fair bit of backlash since its Oscar glory, scooping the coveted Best Picture award in the face of Ang Lee's deserving *Brokeback Mountain*, and now many are rather petulantly exaggerating their distaste for the film.

It seems somewhat odd that a film nobly endeavouring to focus on how racism still runs rampant in LA, and

by effect, every other 21st century metropolis, should come under such harsh criticism, especially when it features as many strong performances as this one does (Thandie Newton and a soulful Terence Howard particularly outstanding as a racism-strained couple), but that is indeed what has happened. Despite the early positive buzz that surrounded the film, it is now seen as one of the most overrated works of recent years, which is certainly a little ruthless when you consider the expertly shot location and its nifty pace.

That is not to say, however, that the faults aren't plentiful, because they are. The multi-strand storyline feels, ultimately, hopelessly contrived and far too neatly sewn together towards

the end, and it could be argued that every scene is exactly the same as the last, with all the episodes centring on the philosophy that racism doesn't just mean men in white hoods. Profound stuff indeed. The film is also full of characters who are just too subservient to the main theme to believe in (the racist cop who really loves his dad and rescues black people, the chap who hates racists but hates black people...) making it impossible to engage on an emotional level with them, which is exactly where you need to be for this to work at all. ★★

PICTURE QUALITY

The look of *Crash* is very raw, with Haggis opting for the gritty feel that's

worked so well for Michael Mann. This lends itself extremely well to the Blu-ray format, the street hues of LA almost humming through your high-def set-up. Haggis also used a lot of natural light when shooting the film, and this again works brilliantly in high-definition, the clear, crisp visuals promoted by the increased resolution. A slight complaint would be that some of the night-time scenes, because of the way they have been lit, hide the detail that Blu-ray gives you. Still, film first, format second, right? ★★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

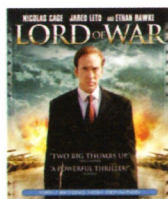
The rescue from the burning car. Grit and gloss combining perfectly in a well edited scene.

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PLAYSTATION
next3

LORD OF WAR

Doing the right thing in the wrong business



ABOUT

Lord Of War starts with an elaborate credit sequence which features a bullet being made, packed, distributed

and shot whilst viewed from the first-person perspective. Admittedly this is hardly the most original piece of cinema, but it is at least stylish meaning that it has something going for it. The rest of the film very nearly doesn't, just saved by fresh subject matter and one or two decent scenes.

The whole film is essentially just one montage about gun-running with Cage lazily narrating over the top of it. You're never quite sure that the film knows where it's going, strung together as it is by loose drama and a faulty twist. There is, we're sure, a good film in here somewhere, but it is just far too scrappy



Director // Andrew Niccol Cast // Nicholas Cage, Jared Leto, Ethan Hawke Price // \$27.99

for us to thoroughly recommend. To think that this is from the guy who wrote *The Truman Show*. ★★

PICTURE QUALITY

A fair amount of the film takes place in Africa, and naturally the bright colours and strong light of the region work well with the high-def format. Unfortunately, there is just nothing that really shows off BD's capabilities, making the brilliance of the picture seem rather dull. ★★★★★

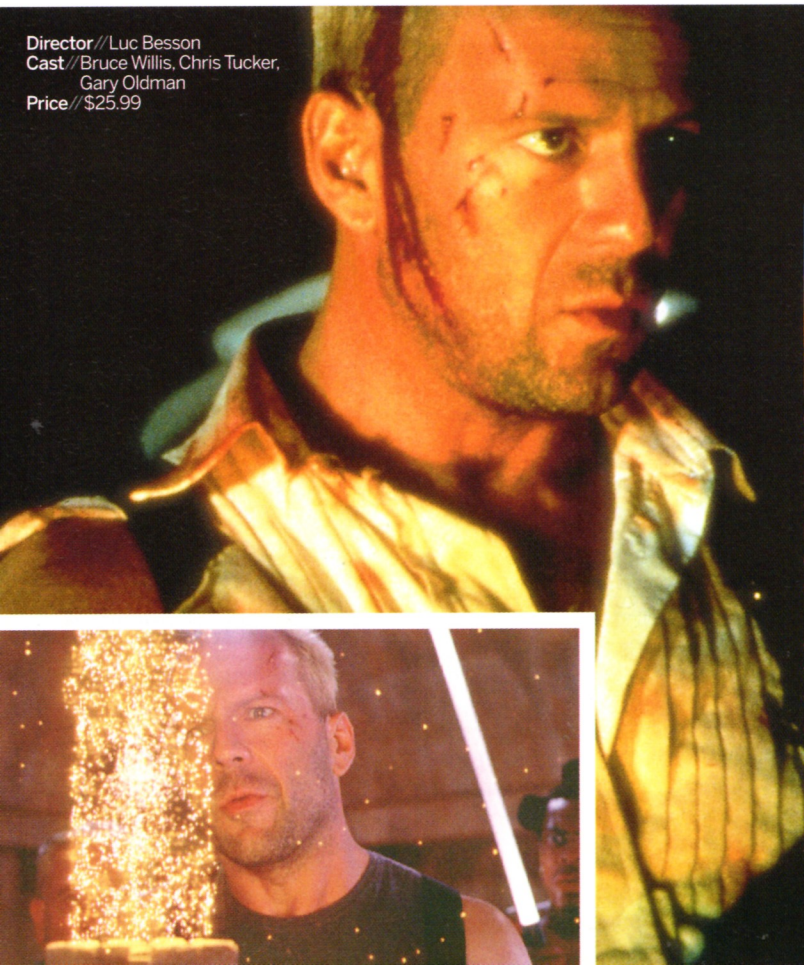
BEST BD SCENE

The dismantling of the aircraft demos the broad palette of the disc superbly.



REVIEW: ▽ **BLU MOVIES** // NEXT MONTH ▴

Director // Luc Besson
Cast // Bruce Willis, Chris Tucker, Gary Oldman
Price // \$25.99



FIFTH ELEMENT

What would John McClane be like in the future?



ABOUT

If ever a film was in danger of being too stylish then this gaudy sci-fi flick would be it. From the

Gautier-designed wardrobe to the slick edits, *The Fifth Element* very nearly collapses under the weight of its own visuals. It manages to survive, however, through being a decent enough adventure yarn decorated with some rather exciting set pieces.

Indeed, the over-the-top plot of the ex-special agent taxi driver protecting the chosen one actually works quite well with the clashing aesthetics and even makes the antics of Chris Tucker and Gary Oldman forgivable. Less redeemable, however, is the final third of the film where Besson has to decide just where it is he's going. Somewhat

forced is the unfortunate answer to that with an entirely unbelievable romance resolving what is otherwise a very straightforward sci-fi. Kisses never sit comfortably with cartoon heroes, guns and explosions, and you'll find no better example of that fact than this. ★★

PICTURE QUALITY

An inexplicably poor transfer that seems alarmingly grey for some reason. So poor is this BD's quality that many are using it as a reason to go to HD DVD. A tragedy really, considering the uniqueness of the visuals – the format could have really shown its potential here. ★★

BEST BD SCENE

The view of the bustling air traffic never ceases to impress, and that's still the case here.

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next3

Director // Yimou Zhang
Cast // Takeshi Kaneshiro, Andy Lau, Ziyi Zhang
Price // \$29.99



ABOUT//

Perhaps rather ignorantly, audiences perceive a depth to some foreign imports that isn't

necessarily there. A case in point is this very film, as would its spiritual predecessor *Hero* be. Telling ancient myths using broad stylistic themes like nature is really not intelligent filmmaking, and yet many saw the films as just this when quite clearly there is no more to these than, say, *The Outlaw Josey Wales*.

That's not to say, though, that *House Of Flying Daggers* is a bad film, it's just not as brilliant as some make out. The martial arts is extremely well choreographed and the performances are equally precise with the entire cast proving that they are indeed, the young Zhang Ziyi included, veterans of the martial arts epic genre.

A further sticking point for us though is the much-praised look of the film. Although there is undeniable merit to a film that looks as pristine as this, it's a shallow beauty that feels too organised to really stun or involve. This sterile feeling is



Beauty is in the eye of the critic

HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS

BEST BD SCENE

The bamboo tree fight scene seems as though it was designed for the high-def format. Perfection.



PICTURE QUALITY

Now this is what we've been waiting for. The look of the film may feel as artificial as a fake eyelash, but we'll be damned if it doesn't showcase the brilliance of the high-def format. Perfectly pitched colours, exquisite detail and, crucially, a massive improvement over the DVD.

★★★★★

Director//James Cameron Cast//Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton, Michael Biehn
Price// \$29.99

TERMINATOR

Another new lease of life for the action classic



ABOUT//

Aside from being the film that launched Arnie's career, this was also the film that introduced everyone to the real James Cameron. The effects,



the bulky action star at the centre of it, the obsession with technology – it's all here in this still-terrific action horror.

Full of iconic images and memorable moments, *The Terminator* is as big a triumph, and as important a film, as any of that era, and it's a testament to Cameron's once enviable talents that it hasn't dated nearly as badly as others of this ilk. A truly irrepressible classic.

★★★★★

PICTURE QUALITY

With Cameron overseeing the transfer, it's no surprise that this is tremendous stuff, although it is a shame that the high-definition makes the poorer effects seem even worse. ★★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

As if *The Terminator* emerging from the wreckage of the truck wasn't iconic enough...

Director//James Cameron Cast//Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton, Edward Furlong Price// \$29.99

TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY

How a cybernetic organism learns to cry



ABOUT//

It's widely reported how difficult a feat it is for a sequel to better an original, but there is simply no denying

that *T2* manages it. An improvement on the first in just about every way, *Terminator 2* broke all box office records when it was first released, and it's not hard to see why. Terrific effects, a genuinely exciting plot with brilliantly cast heroes and villains, *T2* develops everything that was great about the first and still finds a way to feel fresh and iconic all on its own. The best film Cameron will ever make. ★★★★★

PICTURE QUALITY

As well suited to BD as anything else currently available, *T2*'s cold blues and robot models are wonderfully enriched by the high-definition era. Even some



barely dated effects don't stop this from being ace. ★★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

The lowering into the lava pit. The detail on Arnie's make-up against the bright orange is incredible.

Director//Peter Segal Cast//Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore, Sean Astin Price// \$27.99

50 FIRST DATES

Let's hear it for rom-coms in high-definition!



ABOUT//

And so begins the slew of titles that will fill the Blu-ray catalogue with no real logic or reason. Quite why we're

forced to look at a rom-com, however okay it might be, in our first Blu-ray movie review section is beyond us. Surely early BD releases should be about big effects and epic stories, and not about the romance between some guy and a girl who loses her memory every time she goes to sleep.

Nevertheless, here we are, so on we go. From the makers of the excellent *Wedding Singer* comes *50 First Dates*, a friendly film that will offend exactly zero people and make all who watch



it smile at least once. Whilst the two leads fail to recapture the chemistry that made *Wedding Singer* such a joy, there is still enough here to make this not a complete waste of your time. The resolution is also rather courageous considering the genre and whilst the film's gimmick does welcome them, it does, on the whole, sidestep the more obvious gags. It may not be the funniest comedy or the most endearing romance, but this is a gentle enough film to please you for an hour and bit.

★★★

PICTURE QUALITY

Whilst there is nothing wrong with the picture quality, it's extremely hard to see why this benefits from a Blu-ray transfer. There are some flourishes of unexpected style from the cinematographer, but aside from them the high-def format is essentially redundant here. Still, looks bloody clean. ★★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

The meeting in the gallery. Lens flare, apparently, was made for BD.



UNDERWORLD EVOLUTION

So what does turd look like evolved?

Director//Len Wiseman
Cast//Kate Beckinsale, Scott Speedman, Tony Curran Price// \$27.99

We were hoping that once the credits rolled on *Underworld* we'd seen the last of Kate in black. Now we have to sit through more vampire mythology amidst fight scenes that are so bad they didn't make the trailer. Why is this being released? ★

PICTURE QUALITY

Annoyingly good. The predictable style of the series actually works well in high-def. ★★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

We're tempted to say the credits but we'll just stick with the least bland shoot-out.



XXX

Because the recent Bonds haven't been bad enough?

Director//Rob Cohen
Cast//Vin Diesel, Sam Jackson, Asia Argento Price// \$29.99

Here is a film that's so awful that people think it's a pastiche of spy movies. They're wrong: this was a *Bond* film for the MTV generation. Mr Diesel is so lacking in charm he's frightening whilst the set pieces have the imagination of a dead arse.. ★

PICTURE QUALITY

If you see this as just a taster of what a decent blockbuster will look like in high-def then you'll find yourself becoming quite pleased.

★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

Credit where it's due, the sky dive does look pretty decent in high-def.



HITCH

Hooray for good-looking people!

Director//Andy Tennant
Cast//Will Smith, Eva Mendes, Kevin James Price// \$25.99

If you're not happy with your life don't watch *Hitch*. The perfect lifestyles of its two protagonists and the unfunny smoothness in which they get together is sickening. Why would anyone want to watch a rom-com where the hero's quirk is that he's good at getting girls? Were it not for the charm of the two leads, this would be a disaster. ★★

PICTURE QUALITY

There's no scene here that shouts 'needed to be seen in high-def' but the transfer is still competently done. ★★★

BEST BD SCENE

Tough one this, but probably the scene where Mr Smith's head swells.



RoboCop

1 One of the great sci-fi movies in high-def. Drool, drool.

For A Few Dollars More

2 The second best spaghetti western on the best format.

First Blood

3 Excellent post-Nam action flick. Go Sly!

Reservoir Dogs

4 Tarantino's breakthrough movie comes to BD..

Total Recall

5 More sci-fi excellence from Paul Verhoeven.



Spider-Man

6 Sony's darling of the silver screen comes to HD.

Desperado

7 Rodriguez's low-budget spectacular meets 1080p..

Batman Begins

8 This should be great on the next-gen disc.



The Matrix

9 You know it's the one we're all waiting for.

Unforgiven

10 Another Clint western takes advantage of BD.

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PLAYSTATION
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Magic Moments METAL GEAR SOLID

Remembering why PlayStation gaming is the best in the world

1// Raiden's Birthday Suit (Metal Gear Solid 2) Blonde bimbo Raiden escapes captivity with no more than his cupped hands to hide the family jewels and proceeds to leg around Arsenal Gear trying to get his clothes back. One problem – this is a family game! With naked Raiden you can only punch enemies with one fist at a time – the other quickly heading southwards to keep Raiden's modesty intact. Oh, and hanging off ledges is completely out.



2// Fighting The Boss (Metal Gear Solid 3) One of *Metal Gear*'s most beautifully poignant moments – a one-on-one fight with Snake's mentor in a field of white flowers for the right to become Big Boss.

3// Psycho Mantis Reads Your Mind (Metal Gear Solid) Fighting against master-of-telekinesis-and-mind-reading Psycho Mantis is hopeless until a Codec message suggests that you switch your controller to port two so that he can't read your mind. An awesome example of thinking outside the box.

4// It's Not Raiden! (Metal Gear Solid 3) The opening credits and the main protagonist rips off his breathing mask to reveal what looks like Next3's favourite *MGS* pin up boy. It can't be the return of Raiden, surely. But then he takes off the mask to reveal it's been Naked Snake all along. Phew!

5// Cyborg Ninja Cuts Off Ocelot's Arm (Metal Gear Solid) An awesome boss battle is rounded off by the appearance of Cyborg Ninja, one of the series' coolest characters. Not only is his stealth camo a sight to behold on PSOne, but he then goes on to remove Ocelot's gun arm with one swish of his sword.

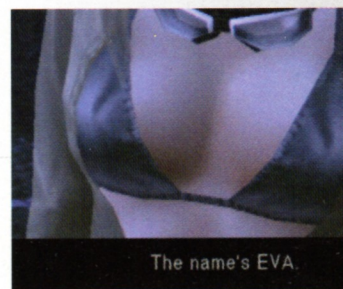
6// Bad Dreams (Metal Gear Solid 3) Snake gets captured and (after some pretty nasty torturing) is left alone in his cell. If you save the game at this point and then switch off your PS2 (effectively making Snake go to sleep) the next time you switch on you get this bizarre, nightmarish game to play until he wakes up. Amazing.

7// Snake Gets Distracted (Metal Gear Solid 3) There may be dozens of highly trained Spetznaz troops closing in on his position, but that doesn't stop our boy getting an eyeful. Pressing **R1** reveals what Snake is looking at during cut-scenes, and at this moment it certainly isn't troop deployment.

8// Snake's Eyes Get Accustomed To The Dark (Metal Gear Solid 3) It's the small touches that make *Metal Gear* so good, and here's a great example: Snake finds himself scrabbling around in the dark in a vast cave system. He can't see a thing until you wait ten minutes and his eyes slowly adjust to the darkness and you can see everything, that is.

9// Meryl Gets All Embarrassed (Metal Gear Solid) Of course, you shouldn't really be staring at her in first person view. Of course the poor girl is going to get all coy if the world's number one secret agent is checking out her butt. But for her to actually get redder the longer you look? Genius.

10// Raiden Kicks Ass (Metal Gear Solid 4 trailer) Okay, we're not even sure that this scene will make it into the final game, but boy does Kojima know how to turn the once lame-as-hell Raiden into the coolest character in the game. Using a lethal combination of martial arts and a samurai sword, Raiden proceeds to take down umpteen Metal Gears all on his own. And, apparently, he's not even a playable character!



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